

New Jersey Herald

Highlands Festival at Waterloo brings folks together with music

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Photo by Tracy Klimek/New Jersey Herald Painter and Newark Middle School art teacher David Oquendo, of Pompton Lakes, paints a mural on Saturday during the Highlands Festival at Waterloo Village in Byram.

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BYRAM — The third annual Highlands Festival at Waterloo kicked off Saturday afternoon and continues today celebrating “all things local” including music, food, beer, history and kayaking.

The musical performances are at the forefront of this event, and several local musicians will take center stage during the festival.

“Music truly brings people together,” said Mark Clifford, musician coordinator for the festival. “We believe we have curated a fantastic weekend of performers that will offer a terrific blend of an eclectic array of musical genres that will please people of all ages.”

Today’s lineup includes Hub Hollow, Marafanyi, Joe Cirotti with Milkweed, Garland Jeffreys and Willie Nile. Some of the musical acts that performed Saturday include Turkey Farm 5, Atlanta Cafe Band, Billy Hector, Occidental Gypsy and The Craig Thatcher Band.

The music and environmental festival, sponsored by the New Jersey Highlands Coalition, is a “celebration of all things local,” according to a coalition spokesperson, and the group aims to promote local music, food, art, history, culture and natural resources.

The two-day festival, according to New Jersey Highlands Coalition trustee Ned Kirby, is the largest to date.

“It’s just really great to celebrate the quality of life we have here in the Highlands,” Kirby said. “There’s lots of people participating here, like our member organizations (to help in fundraising).”

The proceeds raised at the admission gates go to the New Jersey Highlands Coalition to help it in its mission to raise awareness about the natural resources of the state’s Highlands region, to promote the missions of the coalition’s 80-plus non-profit member organizations and to fund the Small Grants Program, which supports local grassroots organizations.

“We continue to grow in size and scope,” said Julia Somers, executive director of the New Jersey Highlands Coalition. “This festival aims to raise awareness in a fun and interactive way about how important our natural resources are and, in particular, to showcase that our precious water source here in the Highlands benefits much of the region.”

The New Jersey Highlands Coalition serves 88 municipalities in Sussex, Warren, Morris, Bergen, Hunterdon, Passaic and Somerset counties that are protected under the New Jersey Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act. The Highlands region provides drinking water for almost 5.4 million people in the region.

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