

IT'S PARTY TIME

PREVIEW: SeaWolves host first block party

Good blockin' starts tonight

By Dave Richards
Staff writer

You've done it at wedding receptions, during ballgames and at dance clubs. No, not make a fool of yourself. Well, maybe that. But we specifically mean performing and spelling out "Y.M.C.A.," the 1978 disco staple by the Village People, which has outlived platform shoes and John Travolta's hair.

Tonight, Erie could make "Y.M.C.A." history. To help celebrate the beginning of block-party season and the title charity for the event, organizers hope to fill Jerry Uht Park and set a record for most Erie people performing "Y.M.C.A." at one time.

"We'll have some local celebrities that are going to dress up as the Village People and get up on the dug-out. (They'll) lead everyone on the field in what we hope is a very large group of people at one time singing and dancing to the 'Y.M.C.A.' song," said Tammy Roche, a YMCA vice president of financial development, membership and marketing.

The attempted "Y.M.C.A." feat starts at about 8:30 p.m. and is just one component of an expanded first night. During a one-hour pre-event (5 p.m.) geared for families, the YMCA will put on a "fun-sized block party."

Look for on-the-field family games, C. Wolf, DJ Bill Page spinning music for kids, a Bounce a Lot attrac-

HEAR IT

The 2014 Erie Downtown Partnership block party series, sponsored by Bud Light and the Erie County Recycling Program, begins today at Jerry Uht Park. Free. See schedule at right.

tion and more. Bands from World of Music's Rock School will kick off the actual block party at 6 p.m.

Each Erie Downtown Partnership block party benefits a different charity. 2013's 10 block parties raised \$44,000 — \$11,000 more than the previous year.

"We believe the many people who attend these events and their charitable giving, and the money stays local, is what makes Erie unique," said John Buchna, the CEO of the Erie Downtown Partnership. StringsforaCure is a new beneficiary; proceeds from the July 10 party will provide direct help for cancer patients — primarily those with breast cancer. Founder Elisa Guida makes jewelry and other items from strings donated by famous musicians.

"We're very excited that Chris (Sirianni of Brewer-ic) picked us as the charity," Guida said.

"I was just working on pieces Bret Michaels donated last year. Daryl Hall, who just became a (Rock) Hall inductee, has donated some strings. Lyle Lovett (too)."

She'll feature strings-related merchandise and raffle

baskets at the Brewer-ic block party.

The schedule features a range of music. Look for Celtic-energized rock with Bastard Bearded Irishmen, a salute to past decades (Money Shot, playing '80s, and I-90s), and a hot night at the Plymouth with Romantic Era pulling in a younger crowd and Ron Yarosz and the Vehicle playing Hammond B-3 drenched blues and rock.

Brewerie will feature a couple of large-sized bands: Ruby Port, which plays horn-powered '70s rock, and the soulful Man's Room Band.

Cell Block is closed, so the series features nine parties instead of 10. Look for more security with six off-duty Erie police officers at each party, two more than before.

"We added some more security just because the event is growing," Buchna said. "Is it a direct, knee-jerk response to what's happening now? No, we had planned doing this last year, and a grant from the Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board helped with the cost."

There's no cost to attend block parties. The Erie SeaWolves, excited about hosting the first one, expect a big turnout.

"I would hope with the winter that we've had, and obviously the spring has been challenging at times, that people are itching to get out," said Mark Pirrello, the team's assistant general manager of sales. "It's awesome we have it."



FILE PHOTO JACK HANRAHAN/Erie Times-News

A crowd gathers on East 10th Street during a downtown block party in June 2013.

VOTE ONLINE: Which component of block parties do you like most? GoErie.com/showcase

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Refuge includes, from left, Ryan Krysiak, Tim Reed, Dan Baney, Corey Williams and Marlay Shollenberger.

PREVIEW: Their kind of party

Band Refuge gives you a respite from what ails you

By Dave Richards
Staff writer

Need a little refuge from workplace strife, the stress of life or, perhaps, a henpecking wife?

Refuge understands. The hard-rocking country band plans to infuse plenty of escapist, made-for-summer-party jams into its headlining set at the season's first block party tonight at Jerry Uht Park.

"People get excited about summer and the

summer music scene in Erie," said Dan Baney, Refuge's lead singer and rhythm guitarist. "Here in Erie, man, we have a great music scene, and in the summer, it seems like all the bands get a second wind."

"We all enjoy getting out of the bars and getting outside. There's a lot less smoke, and it seems like everyone's real happy."

For Refuge, happy doesn't mean "Happy" by Pharrell or the Rolling Stones. It means party-starting songs by such artists as Luke Bryan, Eric Church and Florida Georgia Line.

"We've added a few songs in the last month, some new summer tunes — summer jam kind of stuff," Baney said. "There's a lot of Florida Georgia Line songs that have come out that are danceable country tunes with a summer theme (like) 'This Is How We Roll.'"

"And there's a song I wrote a few months ago that we've been pushing, and it kind of embodies the idea of being outside and partying. It's called 'Corn Whiskey,' and we've been having a lot of success with it. The crowds enjoy it."

Refuge also includes former Super No. 7 gui-

tarist Ryan Krysiak, guitarist Marlay Shollenberger, bassist Tim Reed and drummer Corey Williams. With twin guitarists, Refuge not only kicks its country into overdrive, but also dives into Southern rock, as well as tractor country — country with hip-hop flavored vocals.

"Everyone jokes around about it, they say, 'rock 'n' roll is gone.' It's not gone. It's just changed," Baney said. "It's kind of morphed its way into every genre of music that's out there."

Refuge plays songs by relatively new Southern rockers Blackberry Smoke and Cadillac 3, as

well as a Blackfoot staple, "Train Train," and Free's classic-rock staple "All Right Now."

The goal is to keep the show upbeat and danceable, with songs most fans recognize — whether they're into rock or country. Eric Church, Lynyrd Skynyrd and Jason Aldean's "My Kinda Party" find their way into the set list, too.

Edinboro's Mayflower Hill, which issued its self-titled debut album in May, will play before Refuge. They also open for Dustin Lynch on July 4 at Conneaut Lake Park.

Your dates for block party fun

Ready for rock-blockin' fun? Jerry Uht Park hosts the summer's first block party today from 6 to 10:30 p.m. with Refuge, Mayflower Hill and bands from World of Music's Rock School.

Proceeds from various block party events — games, food, etc. — go to participating charities.

Those who clipped Sunday's schedule of free outdoor summer music events should note there are a couple of changes for the block parties.

Bucket List, with former members of Sixty Inch Slick, Joe Rockhead, Drunk in Memphis and Hear No Evil, will open for the M-80s on June 19 at U Pick 6 Tap House. Ruby Port replaces 25 or 64 for the Brewer-ic's party on July 10.

For more information, visit www.eriendowntown.com.

Today — Refuge, Mayflower Hill. Jerry Uht Park. (YMCA of Greater Erie)

June 12 — Money Shot, I-90s. Sullivan's Pub and Eatery. (A.N.N.A. Shelter)

June 19 — Bucket List, M-80s. U Pick 6 Tap House. (American Red Cross)

June 26 — Romantic Era, Ron Yarosz and the Vehicle. Plymouth Tavern. (Autism Society of Western Pennsylvania)

July 10 — Ruby Port, Man's Room Band. Brewer-ic at Union Station. (StringsforaCure)

July 24 — Midlife Crisis, French Kiss. Sluggers. (Make-A-Wish)

July 31 — Bastard Bearded Irishmen, Jake's Blues. Molly Brannigans/Sherlock's. (Erie County Vietnam Veterans Memorial)

Aug. 7 — French Kiss, Geek Army. Park Place. (Therapy Dogs United Inc.)

Aug. 28 — Malpractice, Key West Express. Scully's Pub. (MECA)

— Dave Richards