

Show helps fight MS

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A Labor Day weekend music tradition will get a new beneficiary.

The musical gathering was started five years ago by Howland native Tommy McCoy, who lives in Florida, with proceeds going to breast cancer.

This year Gary Sloas is taking over the reins, and organizers picked the Multiple Sclerosis Services Agency for Trumbull, Mahoning and Columbiana counties as the recipient for the event, now called Sing for MS.

"Basically, we have several musician friends we know who have been diagnosed with MS," Sloas said. "We decided to help the community and the local musicians afflicted in the area. It seemed like a good cause."

Sloas plays drums in the Mainstreet Lions, which will serve as the house band for the event. Several other bands are on the bill, and musicians who've played with popular local bands dating back to the 1960s will sit in with the different groups.

Sloas expects about 40 musicians to perform over nine hours.

In addition to the Mainstreet Lions, the lineup includes the Gary Markasky Project, Roger Hatfield and Friends, John Sferra, Roger Lewis, Bob Fiorino, Madam Weez, Chook Alberini, the Damian Knapp & Larry Infante Duo and the Full Moon All-Star Band.

The Full Moon All-Star Band features past members of The Shadows, Mom's Apple Pie, MF Rattlesnake and other local favorites and first played at the 2011 benefit concert, which expanded to a two-day affair with one show at Up a Creek and a second concert at Packard Music Hall.

"It's brought a lot of musicians from the past back together that haven't been together for a long time," Sloas said.

Organizers don't have a set goal for this year, but they hope to bring in several thousand dollars for the charity. Those attending are asked for a \$10 donation at the door, which includes pulled pork or chicken dinner courtesy of Up a Creek Tavern. They also will raffle off a guitar autographed by all of the participating musicians.

A new fundraising tool this year is that anyone who donates at least \$40 to the cause can get a song dedicated to them. The donors can't pick any song they want - "It has to be something we know," Sloas said - but they will take requests.

It's such a wonderful event for the area," Sloas said. "We want to make sure that legacy continues."

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