

# Gospel music festival continues to bring unity to the community

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ALTON - Plans are well underway for the 2nd Annual Pietown Gospel Music Festival and 3rd Annual Ron Dunning Memorial Car Cruise according to Greg Gelzinnis, one of the event's organizers.

"We really have been working since last year's event ended, and I am so very pleased that more members of the Faith Community have joined the organizing efforts," Gelzinnis said.

He added, "The assistance from the Main Street United Methodist, Calvary Baptist, Greater St. James Baptist, The Alton Salvation Army, Greater Glory Tabernacle, Bread of Life Fellowship, Union Baptist Church and encouragement from members of the Riverbend Ministerial Alliance and Family Christian Store staff have made this year's planning even more exciting."

The event will take place in Upper Alton on the back parking lot of Main Street United Methodist Church on Friday, July 29 and Saturday, July 30. The Festival will begin on Friday with an opening ceremony and remarks by Alton Mayor Brant Walker at 6 p.m. and will run until 9 p.m. Festivities on Saturday start at 11 a.m. and will go until approximately 9 p.m.

Friday's entertainment line-up will feature the Salvation Army Brass Band, Greater St. James Baptist Church Gospel Choir, the Encounter Youth Choir and the finale for Friday evening will include Steve Davis doing an Elvis Gospel Tribute.

Saturday's line-up is still being finalized, but will begin with the New Jerusalem Singers from Springfield, Ill. (Southern Gospel), and several new acts for the Music Festival: The Gibson Girls, Kyle Greenwell, Fred Church & The Spirituals, The Chosen (Area Pastor's Choir), Bread of Life Fellowship Praise Team, Union Baptist Church Praise & Worship along with community favorite The Nevr2L8 Praise Band.

Gelzinnis shared, "A very exciting finale is being planned for Saturday night that will feature a special performance by the Riverbend Community Gospel Choir, along with some surprises and I promise our community won't want to miss it!"

Terry Stewart is again heading up the 3rd Annual Ron Dunning Memorial Car Cruise, which will take place on Saturday from 4 p.m. to close.

According to Stewart, "Our Car Cruise is open to any vehicles-- classics, antiques, street rods and even motor cycles." He added, "While an 'official registration' is not necessary, I am asking that those interested in coming please contact me at 618-567-7012 so that we can have at least some idea how many vehicles to prepare for

"Our cruise has doubled in size each year and we expect that 2016's cruise will be the largest one yet, a great tribute to Ron Dunning," Stewart remarked.

Delicious food will also be a part of the festival and will include: BBQ pork steaks, Schwegel's famous brats, 1/4 pound hot dogs, grilled corn on the cob, ice-cold

watermelon by the slice, popcorn, kettle corn, crushed fruit icees and ice cold Dr. Pepper products. Souvenir booths, handmade items and information booths will also be present at this year's festival.

"Any other community churches or area vendors that would be interested in being a part of the Gospel Music Festival should contact me during the day at 618-465-7764 or after hours at 618-550-9291," Gelzinnis said, "We are also still accepting major to supporting sponsorships and financial contributions of any size are welcome and appreciated. I would be happy to discuss those options with anyone interested-- business or personal."

Committee member Lt. Bryan Ellison from the Salvation Army remarked, "To have an event like this for the community that is free (except for food purchases) really makes it accessible to everyone-- a great way to bring our community together, and it couldn't be done without the generosity of our business and individual contributors," he said. "We will also be collecting can goods at our booth for our community food pantry and anyone bringing a can to the Music Festival will receive a free bag of popcorn to say thanks!"

Additional and up-to-the-moment information on the Pietown Gospel Music Festival can be found on the event website at [www.pietowngospelmusicfest.com](http://www.pietowngospelmusicfest.com). Once all of the performance acts have been finalized, their performance times will be posted on the site as well.

Primary parking for the event will be available at Calvary Baptist Church, US Bank (Upper Alton), The Franklin Masonic Lodge, and if needed, at Alton Middle School. Additional parking locations will be announced as the Festival date gets closer. There will be limited seating in the Music Festival Food Court for those who are dining, but attendees are encouraged to bring their own portable lawn chairs for seating during the musical performances.

The Gospel Music Festival will go on rain or shine (with some necessary modifications). Performances, exhibits and food will all be moved inside the church if weather deems it necessary.