

Pietown Gospel Musicfest returns to its roots

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ALTON - In 1845 at the time of the Mexican American War, the Illinois Regiments were encamped at Rock Spring Park. It was during that time that the ladies of Upper Alton baked pies and took them to the soldiers and because they enjoyed them so very much, they began calling the Upper Alton area Pietown...and it stuck. On Friday, July 28 & Saturday, July 29, the Pietown Gospel Music Festival will take up residence in its new home – Rock Spring Park. According to one of the event's organizers, Greg Gelzinnis, "Even though the Gospel Music Festival has taken place on the grounds of Main Street United Methodist Church for the past 2 years, it was always our plan to

move the event to Rock Spring Park once we got it established.” Gelzinnis, who also heads up the Rock Spring 2020 revitalization initiative, added, “The Park has undergone such a wonderful transformation over the last 2 years, we felt that it was time to make the Park the Gospel Music Festival’s home, and to really get area residents primed for using the Park again.”

This year’s Pietown Gospel Music Festival will showcase some of the very best Gospel and Sacred music in the region. Area crowd favorites like Fred Church & The Spirituals, The Gibson Girls, Bread of Life Fellowship Praise Team, Never2L8 Praise Band, & the Greater St. James Gospel Choir are being joined by the Community Gospel Choir of St. Louis performing on Friday evening and the Shalom Church NextGeneration Choir from North County St. Louis performing on Saturday evening. Brenda Lancaster, music director at Greater St. James and Pietown entertainment committee member said, “With over 13 hours of jaw-dropping praise music on the line-up, there is literally something for everyone.” Lancaster continued, “Spirits are going to be uplifted, and it is going to be such a powerful moment for our community to come together in a unifying weekend through music and praise...I KNOW God will be smiling.”



The Festival's reach also includes the New Jerusalem Singers, from Springfield, Illinois who have an Old Southern Gospel Sound, and newcomers, The Peyton Sisters from Southern Illinois, whose harmonies have been honed by Joyce Martin Sanders (of The Martins) and who will be performing with The Gaither's this fall.

The finales on both Friday and Saturday are sure to be crowd-pleasers. On Friday evening, Steve Davis as Elvis will be performing a set of Elvis' most well-known Gospel tunes with backup provided by The Rivertown Sound Barbershop Quartet. Saturday's finale will be presented by our own Riverbend Community Gospel Choir who will be celebrating their 15th Anniversary at this year's festival. Sheila Goins, Director and Founding Member of the Gospel Choir shared, "To be a part of this Festival and to be in Rock Spring Park holds great significance for our choir." Goins continued, "We were organized almost 15 years to the day for a Festival to be held in Rock Spring that had to be postponed...so performing on Saturday takes care of a little unfinished business that we had, and what better way to celebrate our Birthday."



While there is certainly going to be plenty of free "food for the soul" at the Pietown Gospel Music Festival, there is also going to be an assortment of economically priced food to nourish hungry festival-goers. BBQ porksteak platters, Schwegel's famous bratwurst, 1/4 pound hotdogs, grilled corn on the cob, ice-cold watermelon, kettle corn,

lemon shake-ups, and ice-cold Dr. Pepper products. Terry Steward, festival vendor chairman said, “It is our hope to provide our festival attendees with great food value, as well as, a chance for our community groups and organizations to be able to raise funds to support their ministries and projects.” Steward added, “There is still a little room for some additional food vendors with different items to join us if they reach out to me quickly.” Steward can be reached by phone at 618-567-7012.



The Pietown Gospel Music Festival will be located on the Upper Athletic Field at Rock Spring Park. Festival hours are Friday from 6:00 – 9:30 pm and on Saturday from 11:00 am – 9:30 pm. Admission to the event is free and attendees are encouraged to bring their own lawn chairs for seating. A special Kids Zone with inflatables and games for kids provided by Abundant Life Community Church will also be an exciting addition to this year’s Music Festival. Primary parking for the event will be in the central parking lot (Candy Cane Village and Santa’s house during Christmas Wonderland). A full artist line-up and performance times can be found on the Website at www.pietowngospelmusicfest.com and click on the Artist tab. Volunteers are also still needed for the Festival, and they can sign-up on the website under the Volunteer Tab.

A special Thank You is also in order for this year’s Pietown Gospel Music Festival Producing Sponsors: Advantage News, Dr. Pepper/Snapple, Liberty Bank, Halpin Music Company, Output Unlimited, Riverbender.com, Abundant Life Community Church,

Calvary Baptist Church and our Community Sponsors and Committee Members from Main Street UMC, Church of the Living God, Bread of Life Fellowship, Greater St. James Baptist, St. Johns Baptist, and The Salvation Army – Alton Corps. Special “technical assistance” for this year’s Music Festival was provided by The Grandpa Gang. The Pietown Gospel Music Festival is being produced by The Drug Free Alton Coalition and Greater Alton Faith Community. For questions or additional information, contact Greg Gelzinnis at 618-550-9291.