

# **Samjam Keeps Going For A Good Cause, Popular Music Festival Will Feature Array Of Musical Genres**

by Tom Emery  
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CARLINVILLE - One of the larger music festivals in small-town Illinois music festival returns this year with an array of musical genres. The 2022 SamJam Music and Brewfest will be held on Saturday, Sept. 24 from noon until 10 p.m. at the Macoupin County Fairgrounds, just north of Carlinville. The event will feature everything from R&B to country and rock and roll, jazz, and American folk.

SamJam was created in 2014 to honor Sam Oswald, who has endured years of struggle with neurofibromatosis (NF), which affects 1 in every 2,500 worldwide. NF is most often noticed in childhood or early adulthood, and appears equally across sexes, races, and ethnic groups.

“We’ve become known for top-quality music,” said Sam’s father, Peter Oswald, who has spearheaded the SamJam events. “Every year, our fans tell us how good our music is, and how much they enjoy listening to it. Creating that type of fan experience is really important to us, and every year new people come and join us,” continued Oswald. “Even the vendors tell us they want to come back. We take a lot of pride in how people view the SamJam experience.”

Since he was diagnosed with NF at age four, Sam, now 37, has battled spinal fusion, two brain tumors, shunt revisions, bone grafting on both legs, knee surgery, dermal tumor removal, and eye surgery.

In July 2020, Sam underwent major surgery to remove a tumor in his chest, near his esophagus. That was followed by another operation in March 2021 to remove a tumor from his thigh, which was a reoccurrence with a bout of cancer from eight years ago.

Among the many, wide-ranging effects of NF are scoliosis, which was an early problem in Sam’s case, as well as seizures, motor delays, vision or hearing loss, disfigurement, bone deformities, speech impediments, loss of balance, and lifelong physical pain.

Though less familiar to the general public, more patients suffer from NF than muscular dystrophy, Tay-Sachs disease, and Huntington’s disease combined.

“NF is never easy. It’s something I have to deal with almost every day, and it can be really hard,” said Sam. “Fortunately, I’ve had a lot of great support from family and friends, which has really helped.”

Thanks to his determination and the support of loved ones, Sam lives on his own in Carlinville, and is able to get around with the help of a special three-wheeled bicycle.

“It can be a struggle, and often is,” Sam said. “But I’m really grateful for what I’m able to do.”

In its first seven editions, SamJam has raised \$71,000, with the funds going to NF Midwest, Inc., an organization that provides research grants and support services in Illinois and five surrounding states. This year's version of SamJam features five bands of distinct musical talents, including the closing act, Al Holliday, and The East Side Rhythm Band. Based on the Metro East, the band mixes the best elements of rhythm and blues with old-school blues, soul, funk, and jazz. The band will release their fourth album later this year and has toured across the country, as well as Europe.

"We're a big band, with a lot of members," laughed Holliday, a Collinsville native. "We all grew up on soul music, which is one reason we have a horn section. We've got a good selection of singers, and a high-energy brand of the music that people know and love."

"We're so excited about coming to SamJam," he said. "We're really glad to get involved with this event for a really good cause, with a night of music and support in the community."

Other performers at SamJam include Positively 4th Street of Springfield, which plays everything from '30s-style blues to rock, country, originals, Bob Dylan, and Tom Petty, and Isaiah Christian and the Rebel Saints, an up-and-coming country singer from Winchester, IL. There's also Pete Jive, a Naperville performer that presents a mix of American folk, rock, and roots reggae, and One Way Traffic, a St. Louis-based progressive bluegrass group. Peter Oswald notes the strides that have been made in the fight against NF, but adds "there's so much more to be done, and there's still a lot of research that is needed.

"Greater public awareness and more funding for research will help find a cure," he said. "We also need to help patients and their families live with this devastating condition."

Like last year, SamJam will be held outside on the carnival midway of the fairgrounds, with two pole tents and a professional stage. Food trucks, a tub raffle, and a wide selection of beer will also be offered. Camping is also available on the fairgrounds.

Tickets for SamJam are only available at the gate and are \$20 for adults and \$10 for students, with free admission for 16 and under. Spectators are urged to bring lawn chairs, blankets, and umbrellas. For more information, or to make donations, visit [www.SamJam4NF.com](http://www.SamJam4NF.com) or call 217-556-4917.

SamJam has benefitted from many loyal sponsors since its inception, and Peter Oswald expresses his gratitude. "We've had a lot of loyal sponsors and donors every year," he said, "This event wouldn't be possible without them. The Macoupin County Fair Board has also been super in working with us to use the fairgrounds."

Sam Oswald, the man behind the event, is certainly looking forward to it. “I just like that people always want to come to SamJam, and help a good cause,” he said, smiling. “That’s the best part of all.”

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