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## Brianfest: Honoring a local legend

BY BRETT KARLAN | JUNE 13, 2013 5:00 AM

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When asked why he was participating in the inaugural Brianfest music festival on Friday at the Yacht Club, local keyboardist Dave Zollo gave a reply that was echoed by all of the artists and supporters taking part in the event.

“It’s just a way to memorialize Brian’s life through music.”

The Brian in Brianfest is Brian Cretzmeyer, a well-known local piano player who died unexpectedly of colon cancer at the age of 29 in June 2009. The festival will start at 8 p.m.

“The inspiration for Brianfest came from a conversation I had with an old drummer in Brian’s band following his funeral,” said John McGarvey, a cousin of Cetzmeier’s and an initial organizer of the event.

“We recognized that a bit of healing time was needed first,” McGarvey said, but he said that the four-year anniversary of the piano player’s death marked a good time to proceed with plans for the event. The festival is now primarily being run by members of the Cretzmeyer family.

Proceeds from the show on Friday will benefit the Brain Cretzmeyer Trust for Young Musicians, a nonprofit organization set up by the Cretzmeyer family that “is dedicated to providing quality music instruction for children who might not otherwise have the opportunity,” according to trust’s mission statement.

The lineup of bands for the festival features such local acts as Tallgrass, the Sullivan Gang, and the Uniphonics, and includes many musicians who played with Cretzmeyer in previous ensembles.

“The show has three main goals,” said Zollo, who will perform a solo show as part of the festival. “It serves to raise awareness about cancer striking young people, and it also gives those of us in the community who knew him a way to memorialize Brian through music.

“And it’s also just a good night of music.”

Many performers taking part in the festival expressed personal and emotional connections with Cretzmeyer and his family as a primary motivation for participating.

“He was a role model,” said Ryan Casteel, the bass player for the Uniphonics, who played with Cretzmeyer in his previous band the Jensen Connection.

Casteel said that bands around the area continually get requests to play benefits, but he said the music community was very receptive to this idea in particular because of the legacy Cretzmeyer left.

“He was the type of person who elevated the playing of all those around him,” Casteel said.

Family members, colleagues, and friends all expressed the belief that honoring Cretzmeyer’s memory through music was particularly fitting.

“Music is what Brian was most passionate about, and the Yacht Club was his home, so a music festival there seemed like the right thing to do,” said Cretzmeyer’s sister, Sarah Cretzmeyer.

Casteel agreed.

“If this festival can work to fill the hole left in the community by Brian’s absence, then that’s a pretty good way to honor him,” he said.

What: Brianfest  
Where: Yacht Club, 13 S. Linn



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