The Newsletter of the Saline Fiddlers

Fiddlin' Around

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As released to the press…

Mountain Heart will join Fiddlers at new high school auditorium



Bluegrass sensation Mountain Heart

By Mike Beck

The **Saline Fiddlers** will perform their Hometown Concerts on November 5-6 at 7:30 pm at the new Saline High School. This year's special guest artists will be the powerhouse bluegrass ensemble **Mountain Heart**. This bluegrass super-group routinely receives standing ovations at the Grand Ole Opry and is currently in contention for five awards from the International Bluegrass Music Association (Visit their website at www.mountainheart.com.).

The Hometown Concerts will take place in the magnificent new Ellen Ewing Performing Arts Center at the new Saline High School at 1300 Campus Drive in Saline. The Saline Fiddlers will feature an all-new show recently created by Artistic Director Ben Culver and Assistant Artistic Directors Jesse Mason and Reid Smith. The Fiddlers will perform a newly expanded repertoire in addition to old Fiddler favorites.

The Hometown Concerts are made possible in part through the generous contributions of Community Bank of Dearborn (formerly Bank of Washtenaw) and EWIE Co., Inc.

This summer's Fiddler Music Camp marked the end of the Saline Fiddlers' first year as a private, non-profit organization. The first year included three tours with performances in New York City, Boston, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Iowa, where they played for 3000 Winnebago owners at their annual convention. Saline Fiddlers also recently released their new CD, *The Sky's the Limit*, the first album released by the group in 2 years. The Saline Fiddlers will be busy performing this year. In addition to the Hometown Concerts and a growing list of events, the Fiddlers recently opened for Grammy winning artist Reba McEntire, *(see* **Reba***, page 3)* and are working out details with a recent invitation to perform at the White House in December.

See **Bluegrass Bliss** *on page 4.*

Tickets for the Hometown Concerts are $15 for adults and $8 for K-12 students and can be purchased online:
www.salinefiddlers.com
or by calling
877-538-FIDDLE or 866-257-5333

Announcing…

Newsletter by email!

You can make a contribution to the Saline Fiddlers without writing a single check!

Yes, that's right! By contacting our website and requesting your copy of Fiddlin' Around by email, you will save us $2.76 a year. That adds up, considering we send out newsletters to over 2000 fans each year!

Advantages to receiving your newsletter by email:

- You will receive your issue of Fiddlin' Around immediately!
- Photos are in color!
- You can choose to print or not to print!
- If you don't print, you save paper!

Please go to www.salinefiddlers.com and request your next newsletter by mail today!

And if you aren't the computer-savvy individual, we will be happy to mail you a copy. Just pass it around to others if you don't wish to save it.

One more thing - if you don't wish to receive newsletters any more, please let us know that, too, at www.salinefiddlers.com.

Thanks from the staff at Fiddlin' Around.

Fiddlin' Around is the official newsletter of the **Saline Fiddlers.**
We publish four times yearly.
Editor: Jen Lahnala
Photos courtesy of loving Fiddler families.
Walt Byers, Executive Director
www.salinefiddlers.com

A Banner Year

By Nancy Warner

Rog Matthews—who is my dad, Sally's grandpa, and western Michigan's biggest Fiddlers fan—kept bugging us about it: "You really ought to have a banner," he'd say, "so people will know who the group is." I always agreed that it sounded like a good idea, but who had the time or motivation to go about having a banner made? Especially this year, with so much going on: a new CD to record and promote, a tour to plan, and the extra work that goes with starting a new non-profit corporation.

Well, Rog did! He found a talented artist/ seamstress named Marilyn Vanden Heuvel, owner of

(Continued on page 3)



Marilyn Vanden Heuvel works on the new Fiddlers banner.

You can make a contribution to the Saline Fiddlers by writing a check, too!

Our donors and sponsors help with travel expenses, recordings, and bringing nationally acclaimed musical ensembles to Saline each year. Additionally, they help to hold down the cost for these dedicated high school students.

Contributions are tax deductible. For more information, contact Business Director Shelly Banet at **1-866-257-5333.**

And thanks for **all** your encouragement and support of our students.

Reba!

Fiddlers open for world class performer at benefit

By Jen and Kelsey



"It was so much fun!" gushed at least a dozen Fiddlers after playing for more than 2000 people as the opening act for country music super-super-star Reba McEntire at the American Cancer Society's "Cattle Baron's Ball."

This benefit dinner raised over $2 million for the charity at the State Fairgrounds in Royal Oak.

The opportunity to open for Reba was "kind of a fluke," says Shelly Banet, Business Director. A gentleman in charge of finding talent for the ball was walking by the Fiddlers as they were performing at the Detroit Festival of Arts in June. He stopped and listened for a while, then sought out Shelly to see if they would play for the ball.

Shelly recalls thanking him for the opportunity and saying, "'I believe October 2nd is the school Homecoming Dance which we hold sacred for our students (along with Prom) so unfortunately we can't perform.' In August we were called a second time to reconsider, and after discussing the idea with Ben (Culver), we decided to ask the kids if they wanted to do it." It was unanimous – the Fiddlers were opening for Reba.

For deciding to do the concert so far in advance, the details only fell into place at the last minute, requiring the Fiddlers to keep the whole day open. Members of the Women's Cross Country Team had to rush from a meet that morning straight to setup, and then shower at the home of one of Shelly's relatives before the actual performance.

The Fiddlers weren't the only participants wearing cowboy hats that evening. Guests wore a variety of casual and formal Western wear to the gala, complete with hats.

Reba was in excellent form, singing from her large selection of past and present #1 hits.

The Fiddlers also played while people filed out of the ball, waiting for valet parking. "That was as much fun as the show," comments a Fiddler.

Was the show worth it in the end, all the work and planning and sacrifice? "It was one of the most amazing experiences of my life," comments another Fiddler. "I wouldn't have missed it for the world, or homecoming."



Banner Year

(Continued from page 2)

Banner Unlimited in Grand Rapids, who understood just what was needed: heavy nylon so it will be durable, reinforced grommets along the top and bottom so it can be hung up in all kinds of different situations, and a great big "Saline Fiddlers" logo right across the middle. Marilyn not only did beautiful work, she did it under a tight deadline so that the banner would be ready in time for the New England tour.

Everyplace we went we found a way to hang it – sometimes right on the stage, sometimes over to one side, sometimes as a skirt in front of the sales table. And we have kept on using it after the tour, everywhere we go. It adds a classy, professional touch, and it definitely lets people know who the group is. Now it's hard to remember how we got by without it for so many years. Thanks, Grandpa!

Looking forward to Mountain Heart

Bluegrass bliss

By Emily

"Take six of the finest, most innovative musicians in bluegrass — all from vastly different backgrounds and upbringings, each influenced by a host of varied musical sounds and styles including everything from Lynyrd Skynyrd, Stevie Ray Vaughn... to Bill Monroe ...Alison Krauss & Union Station...—and you've got the distinct, dynamic sound of bluegrass's newest super-group, **Mountain Heart,"** says Nashville's Craig Havighurst.

What teenager wouldn't be going nuts over the chance to play with a group with this reputation? Well, I know that for me, as a new Fiddler, this is one of the most exciting experiences in my life. Aside from opening for Reba McEntire, I've never had the opportunity to do something so incredible. First being immersed in such a great cultural environment, and now getting a to attend an exclusive workshop with Mountain Heart, I feel like I am the luckiest girl in the world!

The group will be coming to perform with us on November 5th and 6th at the new high school auditorium. That in itself will be amazing, as it is a state-of-the-art facility, so you won't want to miss this tremendous opportunity. To learn more about Mountain Heart, log on to www.mountainheart.com. Tickets are on sale now at www.salinefiddlers.com or by calling 866-257-5333 or 877-538-FIDDLE. Tickets are going fast so get yours now!



Who says Fiddlers don't have fun? Mary and Kim pose with cadets from the Naval Academy in Boston during the Summer 2004 New England Tour.

New to the Family

By Lynda Shea



Two-year 'family' members in the Winnebago dressing room: Peggy Rzepka and Darlene Knickerbocker

I had no idea what it meant to be a Saline Fiddler or a Saline Fiddler parent. Our family was in for a surprise!

Our son had decided over a year ago (with the incentive of a new instrument if he succeeded) to try out for the Saline Fiddlers. Not being at all musical ourselves, we had no idea if he was good enough but supported him all the way. We had been to Hometown concerts with Fiddle Club and liked what we saw. The group looked wholesome and it seemed like a great activity. We sweated the tryouts and anxiously awaited the results. (I say we, his father and I. He had not a concern. "Either I did or I didn't, Mom!")

He was accepted and our world changed. We were proud, excited, and— after the first parent meeting— concerned! This seemed like a BIG commitment!

We have experienced that mixed bag of concern, care and pride ever since. We had no idea what a commitment was required of parents to make this organization go. But the time, effort and work are all accompanied by fun and camaraderie! The work is worth it as this is a GREAT group to belong to. Everyone has made us feel welcome and included. Everyone does their part as well. My husband and I (with our younger daughters) helped out at Fiddler camp this summer. It was four days of intense music, cooking and eating. The Fiddlers worried about the music, the parents cooked and everyone ate and ate well! What a great way to get to know the kids and parents. We became a family.

What does it mean to be a Fiddler parent? It means watching your kids grow in skill and confidence. It means seeing your child in a great environment with outstanding people and opportunities most others will never experience. It means being part of an organization that needs and wants your skills and ideas. It means becoming part of a family that likes to have a lot of fun.

Mission: Possible

By Kristen, junior violist



Chairs and sound techs at the ready for the upcoming Fiddler concert in Winnebago, Iowa.

I have been a superhero since the ninth grade. My team and I rescue victims from cities all over the United States. We have saved the country singer Reba McEntire and this December are on a special mission to save the White House. Our efforts have resulted in the successful rescue of thousands of bored, un-entertained citizens. By bringing these individuals together for a fusion of bluegrass and other styles, through smiles and laughter, and through traditional clogging, we have yet to fail in a mission.

Last summer, however, provided us with our biggest challenge yet. The manager of our superhero team, who decides which cities have the most need of our efforts, received a call for a situation we immediately knew was serious – a Winnebago Convention in Iowa. Yes, somewhere in the midst of cornfields, endless roads, and farms a large gang of evil forces were conspiring. These RVs (while air conditioned and very roomy) were the perfect place for boredom to set in – especially among the elderly. This was a dire situation.

Fifteen hundred Winnebagoes. Now, that's a pretty intimidating sight aside from the fact that we were here to save them all. We had to keep our focus – we had done it before and we could do it again. As we drove through the convention in our 'getaway mobile' we saw signs of boredom everywhere – people gathered outside in lawn chairs, running out of things to talk about. The sight of the Michigan section watching *The Long Long Trailer* over and over again made our eyes water.

It was to go down at 1900 hours. So we got ready – our equipment was set up with precision and care, nothing could be loose or malfunctioning. We donned our costumes: bright reds and blues with contrasting white and black; we applied our war paint: mascara, eyeliner, red lipstick; and finally, we unpacked our weapons. Mine is very crucial to my superheroness, and I treat it with the utmost care: a viola. Type: Lambardi; length: 15 ½"; strings: Larson. Most of my teammates have similar weapons, though none can surpass the slaps on the electric basses.

1900 hours. For these people it was an explosion of energy. "Thank you! We are the Saline Fiddlers, and it is a pleasure to be here tonight." Our lone senior violinist had stepped up to the center microphone to welcome the crowd. Most of them, already intrigued, leaned forward in their seats, eager for the next song.

The cloggers really got the audience on their feet, trying to get a better view. Our male singing number brought rolling laughter from the crowd, our slow songs brought tears to some eyes, our smiles made those who before had sat emotionless smile back at us. They laughed at our jokes, and our ending song, the one sure to cure any last lingers of boredom, had them hooked forever. They "took their own fiddler home with them" in their CD players – a way to ensure there would never be a moment when they couldn't pull out our music and be saved from the long hours of driving whenever they need it. For one night, the grins on the faces of thousands of people, young and old, were easy to read: mission completed.

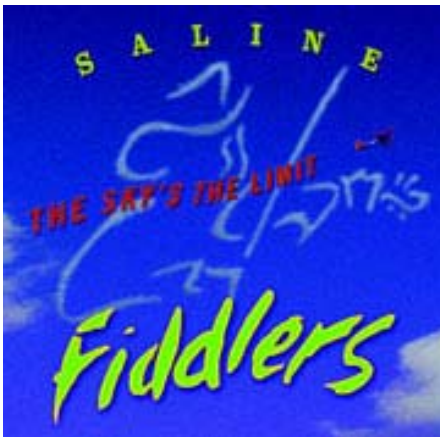
The Sky's the Limit

Fiddlers reach high with their latest recording

By Jen Lahnala

This summer the Fiddlers produced their sixth album, entitled ***The Sky's the Limit***. Our Spring 2004 issue described much about the process involved with making that recording: the 30-plus hours spent in the recording studio, the shared meals, the ever-demanding homework, the boys' hairdos, and the work to blend all the instruments together into one fantastic sound infusion.

On June 28 the Fiddlers held a CD release party at the Union School in downtown Saline. The weather that evening was blessedly beautiful, after an 'iffy' day of showers and sprinkles. Shelly Banet brought along bubbles and sidewalk chalk and other toys for the youngest audience members. For refreshment, a hot dog vendor provided hot dogs and bratwursts, and Fiddler families supplied cookies and fresh popcorn.



Approximately three hundred visitors were in attendance as the Fiddlers played many songs from the CD.

Featured singles are Fiddlers' favorites "Mason's Ape Ron," written by Assistant Artistic Director Jesse Mason, and "Bowl of Bula." Alumnus Brad Phillips contributed his crowd-favorite "Get Up John." Singers Mike Newton and Sally Warner perform their solo tunes "Can't Catch Me" and "Someday Soon," respectively, and Brandon Smith plays "Rainbow Set," a lively fiddling tune in three movements which he wrote himself.

The CD is now available from the website, www.salinefiddlers.com, and other music stores in the area for $16.

New Fiddlers

– From Page 7 story



Kathryn

Kathryn enters her first year as a Fiddler on the viola, the instrument she's played since fifth grade. In addition to the viola, Kathryn's been known to "plunk along" on the piano, has been singing since she was little, and also plays the guitar and mandolin. When Kathryn first heard of the Fiddlers, she wasn't positive she wanted to join, but she warmed up to the idea in middle school and decided to try out. Since she has joined Fiddlers, Kathryn has been surprised at how much fun it is: "I expected the group to be very serious, but I was surprised…how much joking around happens."

So far, Kathryn enjoys any tune with vocals and loves getting a chance to perform on stage – two things she's loved since she was young. At school, Kathryn is involved in cross country and marching band, and plans on running with the track team in the spring and joining the Drama Club. In her spare time, Kathryn enjoys horseback-riding, reading, writing, singing, and acting. As for her future career plans, Kathryn has hopes to become an author and attend Brown University, but she doesn't have any plans set in stone.

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Emily

considering for the future. Emily's favorite song is "Tobin of Lake," and adds that another reason she loves Fiddlers is that it brings her closer to her sister, Michelle.

Meet the new Fiddlers

We would like to introduce you to five of our newest Fiddlers for the 2004-2005 season. The first four Fiddlers were featured in the Summer 2004 issue.

By Kristen Ocampo, junior violist

Gina



Adding strength to the viola section, Gina, a freshman, joined the Fiddlers because they sounded "amazing" and looked like "so much fun." Gina has been playing the viola since the fifth grade and finds it a nice mix between the violin and the cello. Gina's favorite part of Fiddlers so far has been the bus trips and mini-tours.

Aside from Fiddlers, Gina is part of the Flag Corps in the Marching Band, runs for the cross-country team, and takes tap dancing. When she's not busy with one of these activities she can be found reading or bike riding. Gina knows she would like to attend college but is unsure of where or what she will study.

Dan

Helping keep the beat in the rhythm section this year is three-year bass player Dan, a freshman. Dan has shown his talents on the violin, cello, and acoustic bass as well. Besides Fiddlers, Dan is a Boy Scout and is being confirmed this year at his church. So far, Dan enjoys all the traveling the Fiddlers do and likes all the members of the group, which is why he tried out for the group in the first place.



Out of all the new songs Dan has learned, he likes "Lady Be Good" the best and has already stepped up to play an introduction on "I'm An Old Cowhand."

Nick



Nick, (aka Mr. "I'll answer the phone"), joins the rhythm section this year on guitar. Nick first started taking guitar lessons from his piano teacher five years ago. Nick has wanted to join the Fiddlers since he was in fourth grade and watched them play at the Saline Fair. Nick's favorite song is "Bowl of Bula" and rhythm section feature "Man of Constant Sorrow."

So far, the perks of being a Fiddler for Nick have been "gigging" and getting to know new people. Nick is also involved in Boy Scouts. Nick is interested in pursuing a career in special effects, and plans on attending college "someplace warm."

Emily



Emily, freshman sister of violinist Michelle as well as alumna Laura , joins the violin section of the Fiddlers this year. She started playing when she was four years old. Not satisfied with just the violin, Emily has also played the cello and bass in the school orchestra over the years. Why did she join Fiddlers? "To wear the hat," she jokes. Emily enjoys the friends she's made and how everyone in Fiddlers is "nuts" in a "good and fun way."

Outside of Fiddlers, Emily is a student-athlete, participating in soccer and cross country. In her spare time Emily likes to read, ride bikes, and hike. Being a doctor, studying at the University of Michigan, or becoming a massage therapist are all options Emily is

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SALINE Fiddlers

Walt Byers, Executive Director
Ben Culver, Artistic Director
Shelly Banet, Business Director

Direct booking inquiries to Shelly: 1-866-257-5333

www.salinefiddlers.com



Take six of the finest, most innovative musicians in Bluegrass all from vastly different backgrounds and upbringings, each influenced by a host of varied musical sounds and styles including everything from Lynyrd Skynyrd, Stevie Ray Vaughn, James Taylor, and The Dave Mathews Band to George Jones, Bill Monroe, Flatt & Scruggs, Alison Krauss & Union Station, Ricky Skaggs and The David Grisman Quintet -- and you've got the distinct, dynamic sound of Bluegrass's newest super-group, MOUNTAIN HEART. — *Craig Havighurst, Nashville*

With the Saline Fiddlers November 5 & 6, at the new Saline High School's Ellen Ewing Performing Arts Center.

Tickets are going fast! Purchase online at www.salinefiddlers.com or by calling 877-538-FIDDLE or 866-257-5333



The Saline Fiddlers
PO Box 315
Saline, MI 48176

To:

