



JEFF TAYLOR/The Winchester Star

Members of the Boys and Girls Club of the Northern Shenandoah Valley rehearse with Terry Oates (seated) and Kim Moon of Terry Oates and the Mudcats for their upcoming performance at the River House Blues and BBQ event in Watermelon Park.

River House Blues, BBQ

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By Stephanie M. Mangino

The Winchester Star

WINCHESTER- The gentle lilt of Terry Oates' acoustic guitar recently guided a group of young singers through a rendition of the Etta James classic song "At Last" at the Boys and Girls Club of the Northern Shenandoah Valley.

"We want to make sure we use our outside voices," Oates said to the young singers, who are part of the club's newly formed music group.

They'll need them, because the youngsters will perform the song with Oates' music group, Terry Oates and the Mudcats at the

first River House Blues and BBQ from noon to 9 p.m. Saturday at Watermelon Park next to the Shenandoah River near Berryville.

The children will sing with the band at 1 p.m., said event organizer Cheryl Anne Ash of Dancing Beagle Events in Clarke County, and 100 percent of the day's proceeds will benefit the local Boys and Girls Club.

Ash teared up as she watched Oates lead the children through the song several times, saying at one point, "Oh my gosh, that's so sweet."

Oates encouraged the children to sing with full voices and to enjoy the song. "Remember the big finish!" he urged, before the group gleefully belted out, "For you are mine/At last!"

"Very, very nice," Oates told the children. "I think you guys are gonna do a great show."

They will perform on a bill dedicated to Piedmont and Heritage blues music, said Ash, a fan of both styles. Boys and Girls Club children are also set to introduce each group to play the event.

Along with Oates' group, the performers include Danny and Aimee Get the Blues, Paul Pfau and Friends, Cutch Tuttle & the Hound Dog Hill Boys, Good Foot Dance Company, Hard Swimmin' Fish, Skyla Burrell, and Holy Ghost Tent Revival. A special performance is also planned by The Hot Club of Millwood and John Lee.

Three vendors will compete for top BBQ honors and use only locally sourced ingredients and compostable dinnerware, said Ash, who also has a sustainability firm called eCycle Green Collective and Construction.

The vendors are Birddog BBQ of Bluemont, Big Mike's BBQ of Purcellville, and Two Pigs and Chick of Stephens City.

River House Blues and BBQ was born, Ash said, out of her love for the blues.

The Boys and Girls Club involvement came because she also wanted the event to benefit a good cause. Ash said she started researching area nonprofit groups, and when she arrived at the club, she knew she had found the right place.

She visited and was hooked. So was her husband Brian, who will teach some carpentry classes at the club, based at the Douglas Community Learning Center on North Kent Street in Winchester.

Cheryl Ash said she hopes to teach gardening classes in the spring.

"It's a great cause," added Oates, 48, who grew up nearby in Winchester at the corner of Smithfield and Virginia avenues. As he spoke, one of the young singers came up and gave him a quick hug.

He said he knows music made a difference in his life, and helped keep him from straying into bad behaviors.

When he can help kids in the same way with music, he said, he'll do it.

"It's great to be able to inspire younger people," said Oates, who has also been a guitar teacher, as well as a band leader.

Anything raised at the event will be helpful to the club, which Executive Director Heather Forman said will run on a "bare bones" budget of \$161,000 this fiscal year.

The club serves more than 200 children a year with after-school programs for ages 6 to 18. Day-long summer programs are also offered for ages 6 to 12 with teens from 13 to 18 participating in a junior staff program.

The current budget, Forman said, doesn't allow for things like new athletic equipment, such as basketballs and jump ropes or much physical improvement to the building.

The children are extremely excited about their upcoming show, Forman said. "They've talked about nothing but their chance to perform."

They even gave their fellow club members a sneak peek, singing "At Last" in the gym at the club with Oates and two of the band members.

Oates promised the singers they will sing a beautiful song in a beautiful setting, and they will all "sound just like angels."

Tickets

Tickets are \$20 in advance and \$25 at the gate and include camping privileges. Tickets are available at Espresso Bar and Cafe in Winchester, The Berryville Newsstand and Watermelon Park. Some are also available at the Boys and Girls Club and can also be purchased online through riverhouseblues.com.

In addition, the event is a "green" one, with special recycling bags provided to campers. The following day will also include a River House Blues and BBQ acoustic blues and slide guitar workshop with Scott Ainslie. Seats can be reserved by contacting dancingbeaglevents@gmail.com or 540-323-0888

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