

Sweet music: Families central to success of LaureLive fest in Russell

By RYAN DENTSCHEFF | Posted: Thursday, June 15, 2017 7:30 am

“Rivers and roads, rivers and roads, rivers ‘till I reach you.”

As thousands of fans sang along with headliner The Head and the Heart, that final lyric marked the end to the second annual LaureLive music festival last Sunday night.

The two-day event was held at the Laurel School Butler Campus in Russell and Chester townships and attracted an estimated 15,000 people. And unlike many multi-day music festivals across the county, a noticeable portion of the guests were children.

Having the event be as family friendly as possible was of utmost importance to the festival host Laurel School, who teamed up with the event management company Elevation Group.

“We did not want to be Bonnaroo,” said Laurel Head of School Ann Klotz Sunday afternoon as the band Timeflies blared in the distance on one of the three event stages. “We wanted to be something that you could bring your primary school aged children to. That was important to us and important too that there be things for little kids to do because it’s a drag if you come to something and there’s nothing for your children.”

Near the entrance of the festival site, away from the music, there was a kids zone set up featuring bounce houses, a 20-foot inflatable slide and a large arts and crafts center, among other kid-focused activities.

“We wanted to have various ways that you could take a break from the music,” Ms. Klotz said.

The Altmans of Wooster were doing just that as they rested in the shade under a tree next to the kids zone on the 90-degree Sunday. Bobbie Altman – who was with her husband Cliff and children Emma, 8, Leah, 6, and Henry, 2 – said attending music events like LaureLive has become a family tradition. They usually visit the Nelsonville Music Festival in southern Ohio, she said, but were unable to this year. LaureLive was a great alternative.

“This is definitely family friendly, which is nice,” she said. “And I think that’s key, because if you love live music and you love good bands, once you have kids you want to be able to share that experience with them.”

She added that her whole family loves musical acts.

“My kids have been to multiple concerts,” she said. “When I was a kid it wasn’t something that you could really do. So it’s nice to be able to take them out to see some live music.”



Alice McDonald and her brother Felix

Alice McDonald and her brother Felix play with a giant Chess set at Laurelive Music festival on June 11, 2017.

Lindsey and Fernando Camargo and their children Luca, 7, Liam, 6, and Coen, 2, traveled from Sylvania for the two-day event.

Mrs. Camargo said her and her husband purchased two-day passes only for the two of them not realizing that the event would be suitable for their three young children. But after experiencing the first day, they purchased Sunday passes for their children.

“I would have never thought to bring our kids, so I think this is really awesome,” she said, as her and her family sat in the grass waiting for Liam’s favorite band, The Strumbellas, to take the stage.

“Really, this is their first adult concert, so it’s really, really special,” she said. “I’m sure they’ll always remember it.”

Even the musical acts took notice of the families having fun. Michael Franti, of Michael Franti & Spearhead, commented during his high-energy, electric set on how great it was that there were so many kids in the crowd. He even told one 7-year-old boy that he had the best parents in the world for getting him to the front row and also brought children up on stage to sing along with him.

Jonathan Russell, lead singer and guitarist for The Head and the Heart, told the crowd that he too thought it was amazing how many children were at the fest.

“I don’t have kids yet, but when I do, I hope I can take them to events like this and share with them an experience like this,” he said.

In addition to the music, the fest featured 13 local food and beverage vendors and 60 boutique shops selling everything from Hawaiian shirts to fidget spinners.

Ms. Klotz said going local with the vendors was another important element of the show.

“I believe that each of us in this region of the country needs to invest in Cleveland and in Northeast Ohio,” she added. “And this is part of our making a contribution – bringing great music, a cool event that we don’t have quite anything like it and showcasing our incredible campus.”

She said this year’s event went even better than last year’s and the goal is to keep making improvements, keep the students at Laurel School heavily involved and keep the event growing.

The event continues to gain popularity and attract top artists like Gary Clark Jr., who closed the event Saturday night, Young the Giant, NEEDTOBREATHE, St. Paul and the Broken Bones, Dawes, Blue October and the Revivalists.

“Our goal looking forward is to build on our success,” Ms. Klotz said.