

Marcy Playground, Deep Blue Something, top 4th annual Village Music Festival in Youngstown

'90s acts, local talent perform Saturday

BAND SCHEDULE

- 1:00 - Tim Britt
- 1:45 - Tonemah
- 2:30 - Hywater
- 3:20 - Roy G Biv
- 4:15 - Tokyo Monsters
- 5:10 - Scott Celani Band
- 6:00 - Element
- 7:00 - Deep Blue Something
- 8:30 - MARCY PLAYGROUND

The fourth installment of a vibrant Niagara County music festival is coming back to the historic Village of Youngstown where the Niagara River meets Lake Ontario. The fourth annual Village Music Festival will be held Saturday, Aug. 5, in Veterans Park.

The Village Music Festival features an extensive lineup of local, regional and national music acts. The theme of this year's festival is "Remember the '90s." It features headlining acts Deep Blue Something ("Breakfast at Tiffany's") and Marcy Playground ("Sex and Candy"). In addition, the Village Music Festival will feature seven regional music acts, more than 20 local craft vendors, plus food trucks, drink tents and games.

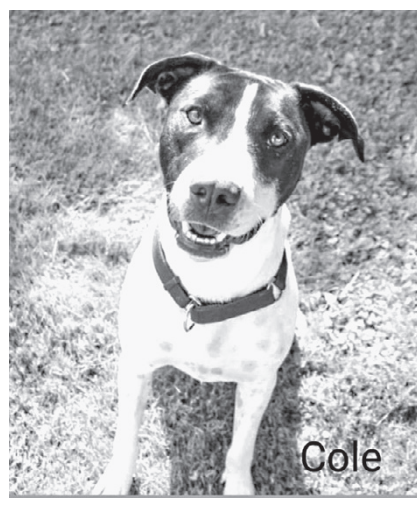
Music-making is set for 1-10 p.m. Admission is \$25 (\$10 for kids 12 and under), and tickets are available at <https://village-music-fest-2023.ticketleap.com/>. Veterans Park is located

on Third Street.

"There are so many great summer festivals in Western New York, and we are really excited to continue that tradition by bringing our fourth installment back to our hometown," said Ray Barry of Barry Entertainment, festival co-founder and noted local musician. "We have an amazing lineup of national and regional talent, and this is a family-friendly event. We're honored to showcase our beautiful town once again."

As an added special element this year, the Village Music Festival is partnering with local charity Totally Buffalo Cares to collect school supplies for the less-fortunate in Niagara County and Western New York. Festival attendees are encouraged to bring pens, pencils, crayons, markers, paper, folders and any other practical school supplies that come to mind to contribute to this worthy cause.

Diamonds in the Ruff gifted \$50,000 for shelter expansion



Pictured are some of the Diamonds in the Ruff dogs. The organization has been rescuing animals in the greater upstate New York community since 2011. In 2014, the nonprofit transitioned to become completely foster-based, giving its animals the experience of living in a home setting, and feeling love and attention they may have never received. Thanks to a donation from Tito's Handmade Vodka, a new, 1,200-square-foot facility in Lockport will provide a space for shelter volunteers to work with animals for training, which is essential to helping animals find their forever homes. (Photos courtesy of Sunshine Sachs Morgan & Lylis)

BY ELIJAH ROBINSON
Contributing Writer

More animals have a chance to find a good home, as Tito's Handmade Vodka recently donated \$53,000 to Diamonds in the Ruff. This donation will help fund the expansion of a new rescue center in Lockport.

Leandra Herzog, fundraising coordinator for the nonprofit, said the gift will increase the organization's capacity to accommodate homeless pets. The number of pets that need a shelter is endless, Herzog explained, and this new shelter helps further Diamonds in the Ruff's mission.

"This allows us probably about 20 additional kennels (that) we now have the availability for," she said. "A big part of allowing us to fulfill those and bring in more animals is we need the volunteers to help support us."

The donation from Tito's was made through its program "Vodka for Dog People," which has, according to its website,

rescued over 120 distillery dogs and supported thousands of animal-focused nonprofits in the U.S.

"From the first distillery dogs that would eventually become family, to the many dogs that frequent our offices now, animals have always been an important part of Tito's Handmade Vodka's history," said Lindsey Bates, director of philanthropy operations at Tito's Handmade Vodka. "The work that Diamonds in the Ruff does to rescue and care for animals throughout upstate New York is truly inspiring, and we are honored to provide this gift to help them save even more animals in need."

In its role as a foster-based rescue, DITR often rescues animals before they can find foster families. According to Herzog, DITR has more than 100 volunteers, and many of them offer up their homes to animals, while others have a limit on the types of animals they can house.

"We also have volunteers that help with facilitating things like screening applications, and some more of the background administrative work," she said. "But specifically, how many we would need to allow us to house this facility more so, I would say ideally we would need ... 20 more volunteers."

DITR's current practice is to house animals in boarding facilities until it can find foster families for them. However, Herzog said the group will now be able to help animals immediately when it expands the rescue center by temporarily housing animals directly in DITR's care until a foster family becomes available.

Tracy Irving, DITR president, explained that, with Tito's help, the organization is able to pre-

pare a dog for a forever home by creating an apartment-like environment.

"This area is like a living area where we can get the dogs prepped to be able to live in a home. So, sitting on a couch, doing vacuuming, washing floors – getting dogs used to that kind of activity, because living in a shelter versus living in a home is very different," she said. "Really just teaching them what the yes and nos are in a home – couch, counter surfing, going to the bathroom outside – just things that we sometimes take for granted with a shelter dog."

Pet adoptions temporarily dip during the summer across the country as the number of animals entering shelters grows. A daily influx of requests for animals is received, but sometimes there are no adoptions. As many animals as the nonprofit's funding and volunteer base allow across the summer months, including some with medical conditions that require special attention, are expected to be rescued.

Before the expansion, Herzog said animals who needed help would be turned away because of the lack of space.

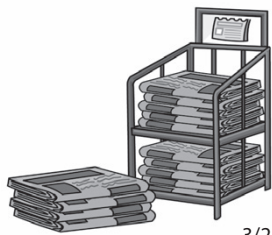
"We get contacted daily to help with animals that are either currently homeless or going to become homeless," she said. "They don't have a place to go, maybe they're at risk of euthanasia, so this is going to be able to make an impact to our local community by being able to say 'yes' to more of those animals in this situation where we can save their lives," she said.

To make a financial contribution to support Diamond in the Ruff's work, apply to be a volunteer or request to be a foster home/adopter, visit its website.

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