

LEE'S SUMMIT JOURNAL

Reaching for the Summit Inaugural Strotherfest 'something magic'

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One of the biggest tests with any inaugural event is whether or not it will meet expectations. According to Ed Zurliene, the inaugural Strotherfest passed that test with flying colors.

"It was almost exactly what we were hoping for," Zurliene, general chairperson, said. "It turned out to be something magic. We were all looking at each other Saturday night and saying 'Oh my,' because we were so amazed at how it all came together."

Strotherfest took place July 21 and 22 on the expansive grounds of Holy Spirit Catholic Church at 1800 SW M-150.

Strotherfest, named for Lee's Summit's original name, "The Town of Strother," featured live musical entertainment, including performances by The Elders, a Kansas City-based Celtic band, and a Kansas City-based Beatles tribute band called Liverpool. Crafts booths, food and drink vendors and a car show also highlighted the two-day community event.

"We had 27 total craft vendors, nine total food vendors, 16 game booths, and three inflatables," said David Bremer, spokesperson for Strotherfest.

Another highlight of the event was the "Top of the Summit" talent contest, a singing competition modeled after the hit show "American Idol." Eighteen-year-old Cayla Solsberg of Lee's Summit won the first-place \$250 prize for her performance of the song "Gimme Gimme" off the "Thoroughly Modern Millie" soundtrack.

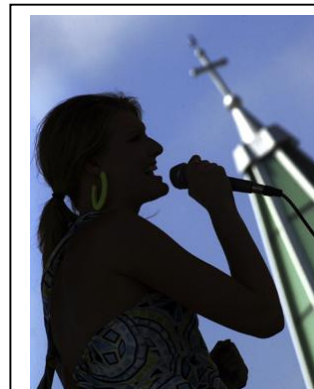
Solsberg, a Lee's Summit High School graduate, said she will attend Rockford College in Illinois and major in musical theater. She said she was excited to win the competition and plans to spend the prize money on clothes. She said she has experience in musical performances, which helped calm her nerves during the competition.

"Everybody's going to be a little bit nervous, but I wasn't too bad because I have been doing it for so long," she said. "It's not worth it to get nervous. Once I get up there, I just go."

Zurliene said an estimated 7,500 people attended Strotherfest on Saturday, and "a few thousand more than that came on Sunday." He said no incidents were reported and the event went on as it was expected. "When we started planning this thing, we looked at three main things we wanted to have," Zurliene said. "We wanted plenty of things for the kids to do, places for people to sit and good food. And we had all of that. It was clean and went off very smooth."

Zurliene added that he personally walked around to gather feedback from those in attendance. "I made it a point to talk to a lot of people and asked them what they thought," he said. "I talked to hundreds of people and everything they said was positive. I had one guy say he was disappointed that we didn't provide chairs, but that was about the extent of that."

Zurliene said planning for next year's Strotherfest would begin soon. He said he plans on making next year's event similar to this year's. "I think it's definitely something worth duplicating," he said. "We look forward to next year. If we can have everything we had on paper this year on paper next year, that would be great." He said he hopes to get more vendor booths and more activities for kids next year, as well as expanding the car show to two days.



Jeff Kirchhoff The Journal
Under the steeple of Holy Spirit Catholic Church, Sabrina Bryant sings "You've Lost That Loving Feeling" as a duet with Cory Peterman during the Top of the Summit talent contest on Saturday at Strotherfest.