

Benefit concert to benefit the community

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By Toni Becker
Of The Free Press

On May 1, the first annual justCommunity Cares Benefit Concert will be held to benefit the mini-grant program, operated through the Upper Bucks Healthy Communities Healthy Youth (HCHY) Coalition.

"The state grant is expiring," executive director of justCommunity and community mobilizer for the HCHY Coalition Lee Rush said, of the funding for the mini-grant program.

The concert, featuring folk musician John McCutcheon, will take place at the Sellersville Theatre.

It will also feature the presentation of the first annual Feryl L. Spaninger Spirit Award.

"We're trying to find local funds to keep the mini-grant program going," Rush said.

The program provides schools in the Quakertown Community and Pennridge

school districts with the funding needed to develop youth programs and activities that build the "40 Assets" identified by the Coalition as ways known to promote healthy, positive youth development.

Last year, each school in the QCS D received \$1,000, while Pennridge schools received \$650.

The grants went to fund programs that build the "40 Assets," including a presentation by "Quiet Riot" - a two-man team that presented an anti-bullying program - at Haycock Elementary School.

The state grant that funded the program will expire June 30 of this year.

Without it, the Coalition will have to rely on local funding to support the program. It's hoped the benefit concert will help supply the necessary funds.

It's also hoped that enough money will be raised to include Palisades Area School District in the program.

"It's going to go back to community schools," Rush said, of the funds generated by the concert.

A folk artist versed on many instruments, McCutcheon will perform the concert from 4 to 6 p.m.

Following his performance, a meet-the-artist dinner will be held at the Washington House.

There will also be a Martin Guitar, valued at more than \$600, raffled off during the concert.

The first ever spirit award will be presented by justCommunity to an Upper Bucks individual from 18 to 25 years of age, who has provided extraordinary service to youth within the community.

The award is in honor of Hilltown resident Feryl L. Spaninger, who passed away last year.

"Feryl was my mentor," Rush said, who is the nephew of Spaninger, adding that every youth needs approximately five

mentors in their life. "My uncle, Feryl, exemplified that kind of man. He was a true mentor."

Spaninger, a founding member of the Pennridge Summer Theater Program and a supporter of the Sellersville Theater, was active in the arts.

He also volunteered on township boards and the Pennridge School District Board, as well as acting as a long-time member of the Perkasio Rotary Club, Chair of a Grand View Hospital Capital Campaign and charter member of the Pennridge Branch of the American Field Service Student Exchange Club.

By presenting the award, it will not only allow justCommunity to recognize youth who are taking active mentoring roles, Rush said, but it will also allow them as an organization to follow in Spaninger's footsteps and mentor those youth to continue to take active roles.

Even though, Rush said,

justCommunity is an advocate, not a mentoring organization.

Founded in 1999 by Rush and based in Quakertown, justCommunity is a non-profit organization geared toward providing consultation, education and training services in the areas of youth development, community mobilization and restorative justice practices to schools, government agencies and other organizations.

The organization is the coordinating agency for the Upper Bucks HCHY Coalition.

The Upper Bucks HCHY Coalition was recently awarded a \$100,000 grant through the federal Drug Free Communities Support Program in Oct. 2004.

Rush said the \$100,000 federal grant is intended to help them reach two goals, which are reducing substance abuse in youth by increasing developmental assets and increasing the knowledge of the coalition.

Current projects include an

Upper Bucks County Youth Summit planned for the day after the concert, May 2, at the James A. Michener Library.

The first annual justCommunity Benefit Concert will be held on May 1, at the Sellersville Theater.

Tickets for the concert may be purchased by calling 215-257-5808 or by logging onto www.st94.com.

Tickets for the meet-the-artist dinner may be purchased by calling 215-538-4796.

Anyone interested in nominating an individual for the first-annual Feryl L. Spaninger Spirit Award can find a copy of the nomination form at the justCommunity Web site, www.justcommunity.com.

Applications must be returned by April 15.