

Newark's Club Phred rocks out for philanthropy

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Fred Dawson hauls his 430-pound Hammond B-3 organ to every performance his band, Club Phred, attends. Dawson continues to use the bulky, four-legged relic from the '60s because of the unique sound it generates from its spinning Leslie speakers.

"It is still kicking butt and taking names," Dawson said.

The Newark-based band has used this sound to raise more than \$400,000 in the past three years for charities in the area.

Dawson, who has played with Roger Daltrey from The Who and Mickey Dollens from the Monkees, said his band tries to emulate the sound from this era.

Club Phred keeps the sound of classic rock tunes from the '60s and '70s by using vintage instruments such as the Hammond organ and Fender Stratocaster guitars, he said.

At 57 years old, Dawson is middle-aged like the rest of the band members, but he said the music keeps them young.

"I have Peter Pan syndrome," he said. "I don't want to grow up."

Formed in 2002, Club Phred has raised money for numerous non-profit organizations, including the Christina Educational Fund, The Delaware Breast Cancer Coalition and the Wellness Community, by playing at local venues like Shaggy's on Main and The Deer Park Tavern.

Annalisa Ekbladh, executive director of the Christina Educational Enrichment Fund, said Club Phred has an incredible influence in the area.

"I do not know any other band that is so mindful on what their role in the community can be," Ekbladh said.

Club Phred has a tremendous impact on the non-profit organizations they support, she said.

"We would not be able to exist with just the grants that we get," Ekbladh said.

The Christina Educational Enrichment Fund provides support and enrichment opportunities for children in the Christina School district from kindergarten to 12th grade, she said. CEEF provides monetary scholarships to graduating seniors and issues vouchers for qualified students to use for a cultural

enrichment activity.

"We are opening up a world to students that would not ordinarily have this opportunity," Ekbladh said.

Joe Van Horn, owner of Shaggy's, said Club Phred usually performs Monday nights in front of crowds ranging from approximately 50 to 350 fans.

"We market to students, but a slow night like Monday is an opportunity to draw an older crowd," Van Horn said.

After a performance, the band splits the profits with the non-profit foundation chosen to receive a donation, he said.

Van Horn said Club Phred brings people into the restaurant for a good cause and exposes the audience to more than just "Mug Night."

Dawson said his band played at Shaggy's one Saturday night in front of a university crowd and he enjoyed the experience of performing in front of students.

"They were wild," he said. "They seemed to have an appreciation for Club Phred and the music even though they were young.

"It keeps us young. It feels like my fifth time through puberty, and there is always a sixth time."