



Good Living Tour Performs in Auburn's Legion Memorial Park

By Emily McClure

The Good Living Tour, a concert series bringing Nebraska musicians to rural communities across the state, stopped in Auburn's Legion Memorial Park on Saturday, June 10.

The concert featured artists Zach Steele, Ian Miller, Lucas Kellison & The Undisco Kids, Daniel Christian and FREAKABOUT. Event organizers estimated the concert drew approximately 400 area music-lovers from the surrounding area to Auburn.

"It's a community-building effort to appreciate arts and culture," said Janny Crotty, the woman largely responsible for bringing the Good Living Tour to Auburn. "I'm excited to have this energy in my hometown."

Crotty, an affiliated fund development coordinator for the Nebraska Community Foundation, said she wanted Auburn to be a stop on the Good Living Tour for a long time. But it wasn't until this year that HEAR Nebraska, the nonprofit group organizing the tour, opened an application by which towns like Auburn could request to become tour stops.

The concert sported a mix of rock, funk and country music. Attendees brought lawn chairs and blankets or camped out on picnic benches in the shade.

Sponsors for the Good Living Tour's stop in Auburn included the Nemaha County Hospital, the Nemaha County Development Foundation Fund, Lifetime Vision Center and Nemaha Envisions Tomorrow. Advertising and promotion was supported by the Nemaha County Lodging and Tourism Tax Committee.

"I think it's really cool that they're bringing Nebraska music culture to small towns that don't get to experience it as much," said Brett Ketter, an Auburn native who brought his dog along to enjoy the music.

Performers Ian Miller and Zach Steele are both natives of Auburn and graduates of Auburn High School.

Steele won the chance to open for the tour's main performers by entering his original composition "Rosetta Starluck" into Hear Nebraska's songwriting contest in May. Miller, who is currently on tour with a band called Refuge, flew in from Nashville for his Good Living Tour performance.

"I love being here, because I spent so long making music with a bunch of the people in the crowd," Miller said. "This is a necessity to happen every year in Auburn, because this heart and passion for making the music scene in rural Nebraska happen is incredible."

A beer garden set up between the park's new concession building and the band shell featured Hickory Road BBQ, which served a variety of Nebraska beers in addition to barbecue sandwiches and nachos. Vendors selling locally made pottery, jams, jellies, apparel and hand-forged metalworks included Covington Crafts, Black Arrow Forge, Aunt Bea's Apiary and Lauretta Pottery Co.

"We love supporting local businesses," said Angie Norman, co-founder of HEAR Nebraska. "And it's special for us to be able to use existing structures like the band shell and have that history be a part of the experience."

Encouraging young adults to appreciate their rural hometowns was a recurring theme throughout the evening.

In an address to the crowd, HEAR Nebraska Co-founder Andrew Norman praised the people of small heartland towns like Auburn as loyal and hardworking and encouraged the young people in the audience to value the communities in which they were raised.

"Growing up, I kinda felt like I had to get out of this state, like there was nothing for me here," Norman said. "But when I did leave, I realized that Nebraska is actually pretty great. I would encourage you to appreciate the great things you have here in Auburn."

Emilee Peese, a native of Peru, Nebraska and an executive and development assistant at the Center for Rural Affairs, a statewide tour sponsor, said Auburn hosting the Good Living Tour demonstrates exactly the kind of community development and cultivation of the arts the Center for Rural Affairs wants to promote in heartland areas.

Crotty agreed, urging the Auburn community to continue putting on these kinds of events now that they've seen how successful they can be.

"It is so important to build community in this way, and I think this is the start of something really special," Crotty said. "Let's continue having these conversations."



HICKORY ROAD BBQ served food and Nebraska beers in the beer garden in front of the band shell.



KATE SMITH (left) and **Brett Ketter** (right) said they hope the Good Living Tour returns to Auburn in the future.



JANNY CROTTY thanked sponsors, the community and crucial volunteers such as Nikki Hayes, Becky Johnson, Kim Beger and Spencer Vogt.



LUCAS KELLISON & the Undisco Kids's smooth harmonies closed out the evening's performances.



ZACH STEELE, (left) Ian Miller (center) and Daniel Christian (right) are all local artists. Steele and Miller are both Auburn natives and graduates of Auburn High School. Christian hails from Tecumseh.



LINCOLN-BASED group FREAKABOUT rocked out as night began to fall over Legion Park.



REPRESENTATIVES FROM the Center for Rural Affairs interacted with Auburn residents throughout the night.