

Natural Healing Express Weekly

Column 201 That Lena Event – Gotta Love Small Towns

Here is one of my favorite quotes from Humphrey Bogart, “Do everything, one thing may turn out right.” I always laugh when I hear that because around here, it feels like we do try to “do everything.” And this week was a shining example of that, and yep, I think it turned out “right”.

My dear departed friend Miss Rita Lobdell was instrumental in reviving an event in Lena called ironically enough, the Taste of Lena. During that first year, (three years ago) she, along with just about everyone in town worked their butts off to turn it into a successful car show, a BBQ and some great music. There were about 20 food vendors and a lot of fun throughout the day.

When Rita first walked into my office and told me I would be helping her “behind the scenes”, we both knew what she really meant was – “you are doing everything I tell you and we will not allow this event to fail.” And, of course, it didn’t. Because that simply wasn’t an option for Rita.

Then, the worst of the worst happened. We lost our dear Rita the February after the event to stupid, stupid cancer. So, when it came time to planning it again, I was half-hearted. However, the group Rita had previously assembled were true warriors. Folks like Marcia and Vern Pax, (AJ’s Lena Maid Meats) Rhonda and Troy Pokoj (Checkered Flag) Don and Pat Brown, John Peterson, Henry Saavadra, Brad Moore, Louise, Lameyer, Ron Fluegel, Roger Schamberger, Donny Fox and Dennis and Ruby Shulz and the Lena Business and Professional Association took the reins and motivated me to get through it. Please forgive me, but I cannot possibly mention everyone here who helped. Just know there are several other folks involved and we thank them too for volunteering, participating and for coming out in 2014.

So, this year (year three now), the Lena downtown is being “revitalized”. Well, Ok. Good for everyone. But it was sketchy whether or not; the logistics of having cement trucks, light poles swinging around and everything torn up would be conducive to hosting an awesome car show, BBQ, Food vendors and a bigger concert.

Just as Rita would have probably directed it, in steps the Vehmeier family (Ross, Gary and Sylvia) owners of the Rafters, The Red Barn, Lena Brewing Company and The Mill Furnishing and Design and agree to host this event which for this year, has been renamed the Lena Shakedown. Wowser. Ross and his crew, headed by Jaime Hedding began to knock it out of the park. They teamed up with our previous organization and revived a very successful non for profit group in the area called Lena Area Special Events Runners to host this new and improved event. And, this LASER group is ROCK Solid. They will be planning and hosting many more events in the Lena Area (actually the Northwest Illinois region) in the near future. Get in touch with them if you have some ideas. They are quite possibly magicians. Giggle.

In essence, they created “the Dream Team”. Which reminds me of an old Chet Atkins quote, “Be careful where you aim. You might just get there.” And get there, I think we did. Last Saturday, the Lena Shakedown went off without a hitch. God blessed us with a beautiful day, great sponsors, awesome and very fun vendors, a perfect car show with beautiful classic cars and a dyno. And the Smoking Hot BBQ

competition was out of this world. The food was amazing. Many proceeds were donated to local charities and non for profit groups were encouraged to sell their wares for fundraising opportunities.

All day long folks were entertained by local DJ Kim Lepak, a great local band headed by Joe Long of the Lena Koa called Just for Kicks and then our friends from Nashville – up and coming country artist, Scotty Randolph and National Touring Acts, Joe Denim and the Hillbilly Soap Opera and budding country superstar, Corey Cox. It was a rockin’ fun time.

Thank you to all the committees, sponsors, volunteers and everyone who participated and came out. – You guys are rock stars and I can hardly wait to see what we do next.

All in all, the day was pretty darn successful and it showcased what small town America is all about – working together and making the magic happen. I can’t help to think Miss Rita was looking down from above, smiling a little bit and forming her list on how we can improve for next year.

Enjoy! Hope to see you soon and as always, please contact us via one of the following methods. Natural Healing Express: Phone 815 990 8732, email: skscham@aol.com 204 W Main St, Lena, IL 61048.

Website: www.naturalhealingexpress.com Facebook: Natural Healing Express