

Swan song for Boxing Day Bash

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An Antigonish holiday tradition will mark its 10th — and final — anniversary next week.

The annual Boxing Day Bash will take centre stage Tuesday, Dec. 26 at Royal Canadian Legion Arras Branch 59 on Main Street.

"Everyone is invited — it is a real community party," event founder Tom Curry said.

Along with filling a musical void on the day after Christmas, the bash provides a celebratory platform to raise funds for a local community organization or charity.

"I know I am not alone in thinking this — it is such an amazing organization and we are so lucky to have it here in our community," Curry said of the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre (AWRC) — this year's beneficiary — and its support and services to women and children.

"I want to do anything I can do to help keep that accessible to people," he added.

Along with AWRC, the Saint Martha's Regional Hospital Auxiliary,

Recovery House, Antigonish Community Food Bank, L'Arche Antigonish, Antigonish Guysborough Early Childhood Intervention, Antigonish CACL, Arts and Health Antigonish, Antigonish Fuel Fund, the Men Health Centre and Building Bridges to Youth Health have been recipients.

Most years, the Boxing Day Bash has garnered \$2,000 or so for the selected organization.

"People have been so supportive," Curry said.

As for how the Antigonish singer-songwriter became involved in the rocking fundraiser, he noted, it became a continuation, of sorts, of another Boxing

Day celebration.

"I stepped in and, kind of, took the reins," Curry said.

For several years, The Trews — the Canadian chart-toppers with deep Antigonish roots — hosted a Dec. 26 show at the former Chuggles on James Street.

"I guess I wanted to keep that tradition going," Curry said, noting keeping it alive became a challenge for the Toronto-based group.

Even with the transition, the event continued to strike a chord with people.

"It seemed like a great night," Curry said, noting people, often, are "looking for something to do" on Boxing Day, an opportunity to get out of the house.

The Boxing Day Bash has also become a reunion, of sorts, with people having a chance to, as Curry described it, "come see old friends."

The list of entertainers that have provided their talents over the years, which is a lengthy one, includes Curry and his scrapes band mates.

Mary Beth Carty, Dave Archibald, Billy Hanifen, Carolyn Curry and Mad Chatter are some of the others who have taken the stage.

This year, scrapes, Jake Hanlon Blues Band, Unidentified Funk Orchestra and Gerald Benoit, once again, will take the stage.

"We want to get as many people up as possible, especially because it is our last one," Curry said, noting — like other shows — there will be others who will, more than likely, perform.

He talked about the team effort involved in making the show successful, including Shannon Aubrecht and Matt Cameron, who provide the sound, while

manager Alex Cameron handles everything on the legion side of the equation.

"Everyone has been amazing," he said.

Curry also noted the support of his sister, Rosemary, and close friend, Noella Murphy, who are invaluable on show night.

"My whole family has always been there for me," he said.

When asked why this will be his final bash, Curry described it as "a nice round number."

"I just think the time has come," he said, adding he hopes to be able to "pass the torch" and

the fundraiser will continue in coming years with someone else taking over its leadership.

Curry agreed the bash has become a 'destination' for many people during the holiday season.

"I get asked about it throughout the year — that's for sure," he said.

The Boxing Day Bash, which will hit its first note at 9 p.m., wraps up at 1 a.m.

Admission is \$10.

If people cannot make it to the show, Curry reminded, they can make a donation through the AWRC website — awrcsasa.ca

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