



Switchback offers services to help soup kitchen

July 2010

The Soup Kitchen Community Centre is switching it up, so to speak

A weekend fundraiser will be the first of its kind for the James Street facility. The American musical duo will play Saturday at the Bethel Bible Chapel concert hall on Black Road.

Calna McGoldrick, soup kitchen co-ordinator, said band brass contacted the facility, offering Switchback's services as the band planned a swing through the region.

"We said yes right away," McGoldrick said Sunday.

"I went and listened to them on the Internet. They have a website and they're fantastic. I've heard nothing but good things about them. We're pretty excited."

The band, whose musical style ranges from Celtic to Cajun, is slated to play Blind River Thursday and Thessalon Friday. The former gig is a fundraiser for the Blind River District Health Center Foundation and the latter is a benefit dance for Algoma Manor and the Royal Canadian Legion.

Band members Marty McCormack (bass and vocals) and Brian Fitzgerald (guitar, mandolin and vocals) both have Canadian roots, so international tour schedules often include stops north of the 49th parallel.

They've played St. Joseph Island several times, with shows often serving as benefits.

McGoldrick said such a fundraiser is timely.

"We're running a little bit low on food and we're getting busier than ever," she said.

"And for the amount of people who come every day, there's not enough seats."

Ninety-six chairs just don't cut it, she contends.

Services, such as the after-school and youth programs, are carried out directly in the dining area, so there's little space to spare.

Expansion would be dandy, but very dear, McGoldrick said.

And probably not in the cards any time soon.

"We don't know how, but we've been thinking about (expanding)," she added.

They store all the kids program stuff, then they have to get it out every single day and put it away. That's so costly, so I'm not sure. But we'd really like to do something."

Four staffers, as well as students, share one main office.

It's so busy, you can't even hear people on the phone," McGoldrick laughs.

Space constraints, however, aren't hampering the aforementioned programs, she added.

The free after-school service has about 30 children registered. It's more summer fun" centred once classes are over, McGoldrick said.

Parents are urged to contact the soup kitchen for more information.

I'm not sure if there's any spots right now, but there maybe a few."

The youth program, for teens 13 to 17, is run by two staff members, who also run the children's service.

They do a lot of fun stuff like cooking and computers and we have a Wii."

Another means of fundraising for the facility involves drama.

Staff and clients have composed a play based on the soup kitchen, which has already generated revenue. Some, including McGoldrick, play themselves, while others take on roles or relate first-person experiences.

We have a woman who talks about her 20 years of drug addiction ... You know, all the things that go along with that," McGoldrick said. True stories It's really good."

The 400 who watched a recent performance at National Community Nurses Conference would agree. They gave the production a standing ovation.

Not to mention \$1,500. They just came up to us and

started donating even though they subsidized our coming down there," McGoldrick said.

We couldn't take the money fast enough. It was incredible."

The play was also performed for five anti-poverty groups at the University of Toronto.

It's kind of like all about the soup kitchen. There's a little humour. People wrote their own stories and acted their own parts."

McGoldrick said a performance is just a phone call away.

We'll come and perform anywhere. We love doing it."

Tickets for Saturday's Switchback show, which starts at 7 p.m., are \$20 at the door and \$18 in advance at the soup kitchen, Life's a Stitch, the box office at Station Mall and the Real Estate Stop.