

Bands unite Friday night

Benefit concert covers 3 floors

By Kari Wethington
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NEWPORT – Elena Desserich was just 6 years old when she was diagnosed with an inoperable brain tumor last fall. Doctors gave her months to live.

Stunned and heartbroken, her family – mother Brooke, father Keith and sister Grace, who live in Wyoming – spent the next nine months helping Elena battle the disease. In August, Elena slipped into a coma and died.

Inspired by her story, musicians Joe Johnson and Don Gauck organized Friday night's "Elenapalooza" concert at Southgate House. Proceeds will benefit The Cure Starts Now Foundation, founded by the Desserich family.

"We found there was little money spent on pediatric brain tumors and as a result we had little to no options," said Brooke Desserich. The foundation aims to raise money to aid in the search for a cure for pediatric brain cancer.

Johnson, of Covington, befriended Elena early this year when she visited him for a haircut at his MainStrasse shop Ritual Salon.

Chemotherapy had left Elena's hair thin, and her self-esteem was suffering, Brooke said. "She was having a case of the blahs – she had been in and out of the hospital with testing and a thousand things a 6-year-old doesn't want to go through," Johnson said.

All it took was six fiery red highlights for Elena to perk up.

"We left the salon that day and Elena's head was held high," said Brooke. "She seemed to enjoy his antics and the fact that he didn't treat her differently regardless of what the tumor had done to her."

Johnson and Gauck rallied their friends in the music community to help coordinate the event, lining up about 20 acts to perform on Friday on all three floors of Southgate House. The night will be rounded out with musical chairs performed by the Black-n-Bluegrass Rollergirls and raffle prizes.

Johnson said he'd love to raise \$10,000 on Friday.

"It's for a good cause – it's for kids," he said. "I can think of a million reasons why people should come."

If you go

■ **What:** Elenapalooza – a benefit for The Cure Starts Now Foundation, featuring music by Mack West, Chaselounge, Patient Zero, Comet Bluegrass All Stars, Kim Taylor and others

■ **When:** Doors at 8 p.m.; music starts at 8:30 p.m. Friday.

■ **Where:** Southgate House, 24 E. Third St., Newport

■ **Price:** \$10 for ages 21 and up; \$13 for ages 18-20

■ **Information:** 859-431-2201; www.southgatehouse.com; www.thecurestartsnow.org



The Enquirer/Ernest Coleman

A double lutz with a lift

While much of the Midwest rued the excess ice this week, Walnut Hills' Ben Walters and his son Robert, 3, delighted in the groomed, glassy ice on Fountain Square's balmy rink.



Elena

Jail: Rental agreement with Butler winds down

From Page C1

Those extra taxes would have paid to build a new jail. The tax also would have funded the Butler County contract until the new jail would open.

After the most recent tax defeat Nov. 6, Hamilton County, which is facing a \$35 million budget deficit in 2008, said it could no longer afford to rent jail beds.

When it ends Dec. 31, the contract will have cost the county \$10 million.

Both Butler and Hamilton counties have been preparing for weeks for the change.

Butler County Sheriff Richard Jones has been "aggressively letting other sheriffs know we have room," said county Administrator Derek Conklin.

Butler County's main jail in Hamilton can house more than 800 inmates – which is more space than it needs. The county also recently renovated and reopened an older 150-bed jail nearby. It rents extra beds to federal authorities and to sheriff's offices in other counties including Warren and Montgomery.

Although the inmate-housing agreements are not set up as money-makers, they allowed the coun-

ty to streamline some operations resulting in \$2 million to \$3 million in additional revenue in 2007, said Chief Deputy Anthony Dwyer.

"In '07, it was a lucrative proposition," he said, although he noted some of the revenue was offset by personnel and operating costs.

Butler County is finalizing its 2008 budget.

Conklin said Hamilton County's pullout probably won't be a big problem. If the sheriff is unable to secure a new housing contract, the county will eliminate overtime hours that were used to staff the extra inmate areas. It also may cut jobs through attrition, if needed.

Liberty: I-75 interchange work about to start

From Page C1

To handle the expected growth in traffic, the project includes work on connecting roads, such as widening portions of Hamilton-Mason Road and extending Cox Road to the north.

Officials say the three-phase project should be finished by early 2010.

The hoped-for business development could bring thousands of jobs in years to come. Meanwhile, the expanded highway interchange could relieve some of the

traffic congestion just to the south on Tylersville Road near I-75.

The roadwork and the future developments are seen as a blessing and a curse, depending on whom you ask.

Critics see the project as a precursor to urban sprawl, traffic congestion and the end of a once-rural Butler County township that has more than tripled its population to 33,000 since 1990.

Supporters argue that the changes are needed to handle further development of the fast-changing landscape.

Some also say that promoting business development could relieve some of the property tax burden on homeowners to pay for schools and other public services.

The full impact won't be known for several years.

During construction, traveling in Liberty Township won't be easy.

"There will be a lot of congestion. But in the long run, a little patience will pay off," said Trustee Christine Maticic.

"The following year, things will open up significantly."

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