

Kitchen Queen rocks Shellbourne

Valparaiso, Indiana – Local band raises money for the canonization

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The Michigan City hard-core acoustic pop-skat band, "Kitchen Queen", in collaboration with Shellbourne Conference Center, organized a benefit concert to raise money for people from Central American countries to travel to Rome for the canonization of Blessed Josemaría Escrivá on October 6th, 2002. The

concert took place in the grounds of Shellbourne, with the pond as backdrop. Band members Johanna (Jo) Clemons, Bobby Swartz, Jane Clemons and Brian Hulse offered to perform for free and donate all proceeds to a fund set up to help people from countries experiencing financial difficulties to travel to Rome.

When Bishop Javier Echevarría, the Prelate of Opus Dei, asked the Prelature's faithful to remember those who were less fortunate in their fundraising efforts, Jo – the band's lead vocalist – decided to get her band involved. Jo and her sister Jane are long-time friends of Shellbourne, having worked in the food service department of the Conference Center, which holds retreats and seminars throughout the year. The doctrinal and spiritual formation at Shellbourne is entrusted to Opus Dei, a personal

Prelature of the Catholic Church. Jo and Jane have also participated in the formation activities – high school retreats, classes, and workshops – provided at the conference center.

Both Jo and Jane are going to Rome for the canonization. "I'm just really excited about going," says Jo. They are working hard to pay for their trip, and they understand the difficulties involved in raising money. In fact they have been working so hard, the staff at Shellbourne decided to donate a small part of the concert money back to them.

The concert was a great opportunity to spread the news about the canonization to many people. Flyers for the concert made their way into local parishes and businesses. The band members, who range from high school sophomores to seniors, spread

the word to all of their friends and family.

On Sunday, June 23rd, the heat index reached an all-time high for that time of the year. Newspapers advised people to stay home and out of the sun. Nevertheless, families appeared at the main gate of the conference center at four o'clock in the afternoon to enjoy the concert. The audience seated themselves on the lawn with picnic dinners, while the band played for two and a half hours. Smaller children danced and played in front of the band, while the older boys amused themselves with frogs from the pond.

Jo summed up what the canonization and Blessed Josemaría means to her: "I'm not part of Opus Dei...but I still respect the Father (Blessed Josemaría). My family prays to him and...many little things have happened. I'm actually honored that

I'm going, and it's amazing how everything is coming together."

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