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Story Hill FireHouse

a story of survival

By "CP" Christopher Peppas

You've no doubt heard the story of the Little Fire Engine that Could. But this is a tale of the Little Firehouse that did. And it's all true.

We're talking about the Story Hill Firehouse, a nifty little Events Venue (for up to 150 people) on Milwaukee's West Side.

Located at 407 North Hawley Road, Milwaukee, it hosts weddings, conferences, lectures ...even pickleball leagues during the winter months. Wait, what... pickleball? Yes, indeed. One had to get very creative as one navigated the pandemic.

And Story Hill Firehouse hosts a passel of live music, including, ahem, jazz.

The J.Ryan Trio, Marcy Daneille, Donna Woodall, Carmen Nickerson & Kostia, Tracy

as an example. And Good Morning Bedlam which bills itself as playing 'furious folk' is also on the slate this year.

And, here's the bonus, if the weather doesn't cooperate, the music just comes inside. They never have to cancel. Check



Hannemann & Theophilus Merriweather and Christopher's Project are among the names that have performed there and are in the regular rotation.

Various and sundry other musical genres also see the light of day outdoors on the lush, green grass that surrounds the property. The rocking Dianna Jones will be there in August,



Oops! We're sorry, everything has to shut down now. Nothing to see here. Move along.

"I feel very blessed to be here (after all that)," Janelle said. "A lot of places didn't make it, but we have. I feel this is the first year of being 'normal.'"

When things were shut down, it was a matter of Meyer-Brown doing whatever she could to drum up some semblance of business to stay afloat.

out their website: www.storyhill-firehouse.com for more info.

The Firehouse is the vision of Janelle Meyer-Brown and it came to fruition late in the year 2019. Story Hill is one of five bungalow-style firehouses sprinkled across the state that have survived the wrecking ball.

After purchasing the building in 2018, Janelle and her husband set about the task of creating an event venue like no other. They began by making renovations and bringing the 1927 structure up to date while at the same time keeping the charm of the original design features.

“I was working for Joe Bartolotta at Discovery World Museum as an event planner,” Janelle said in a recent interview. “In that job, you work a lot of hours and you can’t keep up that pace forever, so I was looking to open a smaller venue for something to operate as I got older.”

There were a couple of other places on her short list, but spotted and immediately fell in love with the charm of Story Hill. The stain glass repair business took Meyer-Brown’s bank offer over two other cash offers because she was going to share the building with the public and that meant a great deal to him.

So, after all the hard work, the Story Hill Firehouse was all set to host its first event – a wedding. That was in March, 2020.



“We did events with ten people. Weddings with no dancing, keeping socially distant and following all of the guidelines,” she added.

Janelle turned to musicians who she discovered needed and wanted a place to play and found precious few that were even open to the idea.

“I have a greater appreciation for musicians and the love they have for what they do.

“We started doing outside shows. We couldn’t pay them anything but the musicians played for tips and the people came. We spent a little money for ads on social media. It was my only marketing plan.”

And as the pandemic eased and more and more events came a knocking, “now we’re paying musicians and we have regular

people who come here for the music,” Janelle added.

The Engine Bay Area has huge doors that are ideal for food trucks. One can bring in outside catering to events at the firehouse provided they are licensed. Beverages and bartenders are included in the various packages to rent Story Hill.

The musical patrons can bring food in from area restaurants to nosh on while listening, but they must get their libations at the wooden bars in the facility.

This is a big boost to the local economy as well...a win-win.