

Mighty Fine Guitars Nov. 30 benefit concert helps fire victims

By Lou Fancher



The Quitters

Photos provided

One way to determine the humanitarian temperature of a community is the degree of difficulty required to convince people to take credit for their own good deeds and generosity.

It requires a boatload of persuasion to get Mighty Fine Guitar shop owner Stevie Coyle to pop the cork about the Nov. 30 Camp Fire Benefit at MFG concert; the entire proceeds of which will go to people rebuilding their lives after the Nov. 8 Camp Fire in Butte County. On the list of performers joining finger-picking guitarist Coyle are Glenn Houston (Coyle's co-guitarist in the duo, The Quitters), Leftover Dreams (Tony Marcus and Patrice Haan), Teresa Tudury, Tricia Hellman Gibbs and others. The 8 p.m. performance takes place in The Big Room, a well-known, 75-person, in-store performance space located next door to Coyle's Lafayette shop. Use of the space is donated by Lamorinda Music owners Colleen and John McCormick.

Of course, like Coyle, the McCormicks aren't out waving the flag of giving either. They're just giving.

Coyle and the McCormick's reticence could come because the show, by the time this article goes to print, is sure to sell out and have a waiting list. Coyle put the word out when he heard that people would be uplifted to learn about the rapid response and to know of the North Valley Com-

munity Foundation, and created a Facebook Live stream of the concert with the suggestion for sending donations.

"Within five hours, we had 67 seats reserved," says Coyle. "I had to go with RSVP so we don't have a throng out there. I only wish I could add a second show." During a busy holiday season, The Big Room is mostly booked, as are other locations in Lamorinda that Coyle contacted. "I would have liked to have done this even sooner, but I'm grateful to my niece, Colleen, for allowing us to use the space for even one night."

Coyle says the NVCF is already accepting donations and will be easily accessed during the concert broadcast by people unable to attend the live show. "You just hit Mighty Fine Guitar's Facebook page or my personal Stevie Coyle FB page. You'll have the show to watch and it will have the URL for where to donate. Facebook Live is astonishing, so hopefully donations will come in that way as well."

The foundation, he emphasizes, has low administrative costs. "So many people have found out that organizations devote little money to the people who actually need the help. But as far as I have learned, this one does a great job."

Asked to talk about the camaraderie between artists, Coyle opens up. "There's serendipity onstage," he says, about per-

forming with Houston. "He was with me in the first iteration of The Waybacks (a four-member band Coyle, Houston and Wayne "Chojo" Jacques founded in the late 1990s that was joined by singer, songwriter and guitarist James Nash in 1999). Glenn plays left-handed and upside down as well. He doesn't turn the low strings around so they're closer to his face. He plays bluegrass, Chicago style blues on the electric, all flat-picking, where I do finger-picking. Our styles are complementary. We can turn on a dime and play something we've never played before and feel confident."

Coyle says the two jazz musicians who make up the duo Leftover Dreams and every solo artist he invited instantly said "Yes." Some of them had played in Butte County area music festivals, but most performers just wanted to use their art to benefit people in need. Coyle and Houston recently had a private gig near Paradise. "It was a house concert, almost at ground zero," he recalls. "Their place was luckily spared. So for us there's personal stake, but also, being hundreds of miles away, breathing the smoke - let's just say it's easy to put something together."

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