

Field Day brings on music for cancer fundraiser

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“When people receive a pancreatic cancer diagnosis it is very grim,” said Katie Field Pernell, who lost her mother, Julie Field, in November 2014 after a tough, two-year fight against the terminal illness. “Not long after that I remember sitting with friends and saying I

wanted to do something for our community because research is desperately needed and there is nothing locally that provides any kind of support, recognition or awareness. I wanted to bring that to Tallahassee.”

In 2016, Pernell co-founded the Field Day Music Festival with her friend and For the City Events Board Member, Stacy Hartmann. Hartman had approached

Pernell about creating a fundraiser through the nonprofit.

Pernell’s love for music festivals sparked the idea to create an outdoor “field day.” The pair teamed up when they said the name out loud for the first time, as they had serendipitously arrived at the event’s title which coincidentally highlights Pernell’s mother’s surname.

Feb. 23 will mark the fourth year of the Field Day Music Festival and features headliners Shinyribs from Austin, Texas, whose performances have been called “an exaltation of spirit.” The Currys, known for their Americana flavor and flair for storytelling will also share the stage. Local band, Revival rounds

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out the line-up featuring Avis Berry, Jeff Davis, Chris Skene, Lyndon Thacker, Al-jah Motika and Dillon Bradley-Brown.

In the first three years, Pernell says the event has raised close to \$50,000 for pancreatic cancer research and support. This will be the first year that the event is hosted through the Judy Field Memorial Foundation as well, which Pernell started in her mother's honor.

"I tend to turn to music a lot when I'm in a good mood or if I'm trying to get myself out of a funk," says Pernell, who regularly attends Atlanta's Music Midtown Festival. "I've always enjoyed all types of music, though with our festival we stick to Americana rock."

Pernell says the last concert she attended with her mother was to see Jimmy Buffet. Music remains a large part of her day. Growing up, she danced with the Tallahassee Ballet and most enjoyed dancing to different variations by George Gershwin and the Beach Boys. Choreography runs through her head when Tchaikovsky's *The Nutcracker* plays, and she takes her sons to see the performance every year.

As a former humanities major and long-time art aficionado, Pernell recognizes the creative work it takes to orchestrate such a large-scale festival. During the early research phases of Field Day, she and Hartmann would attend other local music events and ask for expertise from community leaders.

They attended Due South in Thomasville and the Goodwood Museum and Gardens' Goodwood Jams to brainstorm ideas. Pernell says much of what she and Hartmann have learned has come about from trial and error—from organizing food trucks to figuring out where



The 2019 annual Field Day Music Festival with local band, Slow Low Crow on stage. This year's event will Feb. 23 at Maclay Gardens. KATIE REEVES

to place bathrooms.

"There have been times in the last several years in planning when things have fallen through or we've had to scramble and come up with another solution," says Pernell. "But it is important to not give up and be flexible."

During their first year they quickly recognized that this would be a more family-oriented event as young children left early, and so they shifted the time of their headliner, who ran until 11 p.m., to finish at 7 p.m. Field Day has also found a home at Alfred B. Maclay Gardens State Park this year.

Last year 600 people attended to listen to music, enjoy the biergarten, and play outdoor games. Pernell says they hope to double their numbers this year. She will never forget walking out to see the crowd last year as she and Hartmann announced the final band and thanked their top sponsors.

"In the past Stacy and I hadn't gotten onstage, we always had an emcee," says Pernell. "It was pretty incredible looking out at all the people and seeing familiar faces and friends. It just got me so excited and touched that we continue to have this community that wanted to come out and support a great cause and listen to some music."

Pernell has sights set on a multi-stage event in the future, making Field Day Music Festival a signature city event. She also recognizes the financial burden many families take on when battling pancreatic cancer and hopes to eventually create a support system through the foundation for caregivers, those who have lost loved ones and patients.

By bringing awareness to one of the leading cancer-related killers, Pernell wants to change the narrative, and is proud to continue doing so in her moth-



2nd annual Field Day Music Festival in 2018 with Kyle and Stacy Hartmann and Katie and Jason Pernell.

KATIE REEVES

If you go

What: Field Day Music Festival

When: 2-7 p.m., Sunday, Feb. 23

Where: Alfred B. Maclay Gardens State Park, 3540 Thomasville Road

Cost: General admission \$30, VIP \$150; late admission \$15, kids 12 and under free

Contact: For more information, visit <https://www.fielddaytallahassee.com/>.

er's name.

"Don't think small," says Pernell. "You can figure out how to make it work if you're asking enough questions. If you have something on your heart, things you want to accomplish or change, nothing is too big."

Amanda Sieradzki is the feature writer for the Council on Culture & Arts. COCA is the capital area's umbrella agency for arts and culture (www.tallahasseearts.org).