



Exclusive interview

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Rockin' out

Grand Folk Railroad performs at Emma Clark Library — A14



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Grand Folk Railroad performs at Emma Clark Library Friday, Aug. 4. Photo by G.T. Scarlatos

Live music on the Emma Clark library lawn

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Blankets, lawn chairs and picnics dressed the front lawn of Emma S. Clark Memorial Library on Friday evening, Aug. 4, as the Three Village community staple held a free concert, featuring Grand Folk Railroad, a 1960s-'70s inspired band.

COMMUNITY Despite gloomy skies, the event brought families, couples, pets and passersby together. Children danced as fans clapped and sang along.

GFR's lead guitarist, Frank Doris, enjoyed performing for the audience saying, "When you see someone singing along, it's a great feeling for all of us."

The library has been hosting summer concert events for over three decades,

showcasing a variety of genres such as folk, blues, rock and jazz.

"Having community events like these are important for library patrons to see that we can create a fun and relaxing environment where the community can join together on a beautiful lawn in the summer," said Carolyn Emerson, event organizer and reference librarian at Emma Clark Library.

Having been together for nearly 14 years, GFR has played at venues across Long Island's North Shore, including the Port Jefferson Village Center and Stony Brook's Long Island Music and Entertainment Hall of Fame. In 2010 the band released its first CD, "True North," a collection of forgotten favorites.

"The event was great — great turnouts, and such an incredible building," lead singer Susan Schwartz-Christian said. She was joined by

her husband, Mike Christian, who performs as the band's drummer. The fourth band member, Gary Shoenberger, played the keyboards.

On the cool summer evening, GFR played songs such as "Summer Breeze" by Seals & Crofts. The group also played songs by another local band, Alive 'N Kickin'.

People gathered from all over the Long Island for the free event. "I love the bands the library hosts, they always deliver," said Gale Putt, an East Setauket resident.

Throughout the show, Schwartz-Christian exchanged her guitar for a banjo and demonstrated her musicianship with a perfectly pitched flute solo.

Between songs and switching instruments, bandmates cracked jokes and offered cheerful conversation to the audience. As the concert came to a close, all band members showcased

their vocals together, and drummer Christian traded his sticks for an electric guitar.

Emma Clark, standing as Suffolk County's oldest public library, has been serving the Three Village community since 1892. Comprising over 200,000 books, periodicals, audio, video and software materials, the library's collection continues to expand, finding new ways to serve the community.

The library has recently undergone its latest construction project, including an outdoor terrace and a cafe, adding nearly 800 square feet to the historic building.

"The summer evening concerts have brought together more than 200 community members [per concert] each year," Emerson said, adding that she hopes to continue holding summer concerts in the future.