

## Music mania

*Volunteering at Northgate Music Festival gives students free food, music and experience*

By Will Knous  
THE BATTALION

Heather Prestridge decided to give something back to the Aggie community by volunteering for the Northgate Music Festival in its inaugural year, 1998, and is now the event's coordinator.

"The festival was started back in 1998, and at that time I was still an undergrad at A&M," Prestridge said. "I was sort of involved in a little bit of the planning, and I helped out at the festival. Since then it has been passed down to other A&M students."

The first Northgate Music Festival was planned, coordinated and conducted by A&M students with nothing but an incredible love for live music and the desire to bolster the sputtering A&M music scene, Prestridge said. Today, these same student volunteers are looking for the next generation of music lovers to carry on this tradition.

"(Volunteering) is a huge part of the festival — we would not be able to have the event without the volunteers," Prestridge said. "We even have two people heading up the volunteer committee this year because it is such a big job — we will have about 150 to 200 volunteers."

Of course, that is just an estimate for what Prestridge hopes will be a great turnout of students looking to volunteer their time and effort. The festival is continually looking for people to help out with loading the bands in and out, checking wristbands at the door, selling tickets, wristbands and merchandise and even working security.

One of the two directors of volunteers is Juan Rivera, a recent graduate who still works in College Station. His initial motivation for volunteering hits pretty close to home for most students.

"The real reason I (volunteered) is because I did not want to pay the money for the tickets and so I just volunteered — I just had such a good time that I stayed involved with it," Rivera said. "I got involved four years ago as a general volunteer, and I just stayed on and eventually became a venue manager."

People could be provoked to volunteer for many varied reasons, Rivera said. Some might want the free food and show tickets, while others might be looking to give something back to the Bryan-College Station area. Most importantly, anyone can lend a hand.

"Volunteers are anyone from the community, because basically this is a charity for the community," Rivera said. "You don't have to be a student to volunteer — if you want to volunteer for the festival, help out a good cause or if you just want the free wristband for a show, we will go ahead and set you up."

"Mainly it is students but sometimes, like this year, one of our charities will help out by sending some volunteers to the festival," Prestridge said. "Those volunteers get a free pass into the festival for working one day. It is a good deal, you know, you get to see behind the scenes at the festival, you get to meet some of the musicians, you get to see the show

from really close up and you get to help out a good cause helping out the charities that the festival has chosen this year."

The range of qualifications necessary for volunteers is as wide as the spectrum of music styles that the festival brings in.

"We are looking for people who have some kind of interest in music, someone who wants to help out a good cause ... anyone who is interested in working with music should definitely get involved," Rivera said. "It is a good way to learn more about the business, a good way to meet a lot of people. Basically we need people who will be excited — people that will be interested and enthusiastic — also people that are hungry, because we feed them each day."

Volunteers' involvement can be equally as varied. Casey Bell, co-director of volunteers and a junior political science major, was a general volunteer last year.

"I was in the festival last year as a volunteer, and it was my first year — I just decided I wanted to me a little more involved — now I am the co-director of volunteers."

Sometimes reasons for volunteering may have as much to do with future plans as simply wanting to participate in a great event. Bell and Rivera are both banking on a career in the music industry.

"I want to make a career for myself out of music, so I figure anything that is associated with music or the business part of music is for me," Bell said. "Volunteering gives you experience with bands and helps you realize what is actually involved."

Rivera said he has always been interested in music and planning events around it.

"I got my foot in the door — learning how you plan concerts or how you should coordinate sound," Rivera said.

The Northgate Music Festival might be that stepping stone for anyone looking to break into the industry.

"I think that the Northgate festival is one of the best things to get involved in if you are interested in music because there are so many different bands there, there is such a variety of people there," Bell said. "If you are at all interested in music this is the best thing you can do."



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Jack O'Neill (left) and Cary Pierce of Jackopierce play at Shadow Canyon during the second day of the 2003 Northgate Music Festival. The festival is recruiting volunteers now for its upcoming event.

It just opens your eyes to so many different things. Before, I never really knew what was out there or how things worked by being involved with this — especially this year."

Although the response has been great, there are plenty of spots left for people who want to help out.

"Even the first day that applications came out, people were volunteering. People shouldn't be afraid to volunteer, even up to the last minute. People should never be afraid to volunteer. We can always use more help," Bell said. "(The festival) is just a really great opportunity to bring live music to College Station, and (volunteering) is just a great way to do it."

Those who want to volunteer for the Northgate Music Festival have two options to go get involved: Download the application online at [www.northgatemusic.com](http://www.northgatemusic.com), fill it out and mail it or just sign up online.

Tickets go on sale Feb. 15 at the Northgate venues and tickets prices are \$20 and \$25 at the door.

For a list of venues, headliners and upcoming news including band lists and schedules, check out [www.northgatemusic.com](http://www.northgatemusic.com).

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