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Fiddle Contest ?plays on? at Festival

By Marni Walsh

The Heritage Music Festival's Fiddle Contest ?plays on? this August, as it has for more than six decades, securing a place in Canada's music history archives.

The Canadian Open Old Time Fiddle Championship begins playoffs on Friday, August 11, starting at 10 am at the Centre Dufferin Recreation Centre.

The fiddle contest started out as a Shelburne Rotary Club fundraiser to support the charitable works in the area in 1951.

According to the Club, ?The main debate seemed to be around the fact that at that time in Dufferin County everybody could hear the fiddle played for free at home, so why would they pay to hear someone play at the arena? Despite these doubts, the first contest went ahead and was a resounding success.?

The popularity of the contest put Shelburne, ever since referred to as ?Fiddle Town,? on the map.

?The essential elements of the contest have remained unchanged since the first fiddler stepped onto the stage,? Rotarians say. ?The play-downs still happen on Friday, although they now start in the morning so that they are finished in time for a concert on Friday night.?

This year's headline entertainer will be award winning country singer Corb Lund.

Friday and Saturday nights focus on the fiddle championships, but the Rotarians say ?events surrounding the contest have expanded over the years? to include more concerts, a barn dance and jamboree, jam sessions, and an open air market, as well as the fiddle parade, non-denominational church service, and a pork BBQ to finish off the week's events.

Beginning August 11 and 12 at 10 am, the competition will include classes in the following order:

9 years old and under

10-12 years old

56 years old and over

18 years old and under (Junior Championship)

Novelty, including trick fiddle routines

Duets

Championship Class

19 to 55 years old

Gospel

Starting times for each class will depend on the number of entrants for each class. Those who register to compete will receive free admission to the Wednesday, Thursday, Friday evening and Saturday afternoon shows.

Competitors, who pay a $20 entry fee, are required to play old-time Canadian-style waltzes, jigs, and reels in specific orders; they are allowed to have one accompanist.

There are many cash prizes ranging from $50 to $1,500 for the Grand Champion.

Judges award points on a rank order, based on time, tempo, style, accuracy, technique and tone. Combined ranks of all judges determine the final contestant ranking.

This year's judges include fiddlers: Karen Reed, Matthew Johnson, and Tyler Beckett with Scott Woods as the Master of Ceremonies.

The Fiddle Contest finals will be on Saturday night with entertainment by ?The Barrel Boys.?

Kerstin Stinson, Rotary Club of Shelburne Past President says, ?One thing we have to remember is that we do this all for charity.?

?Many local organizations have benefited from the money that we raise from the Heritage Music Festival (aka Fiddle Contest). Not only do we want to continue to support local sports teams, breakfast clubs, the food bank, Music & Memory and the Headwaters Health Care Centre, to name only a few, we are spearheading the fundraising for a splash pad in Shelburne. We encourage local citizens to come out to support the Festival and help causes in our town.? Tickets are available at Holmes Appliance and Music Shop, 135 Main St. W., Shelburne 519-925-3037 or on-line at www.heritagemusicfestival.com