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Living

## Ready to jam for justice: Area judge shares his music for charity (with video)

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By RON VIDIKA

[rvidika@MorningJournal.com](mailto:rvidika@MorningJournal.com)

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ELYRIA — On Thursday, Lorain County Common Pleas Court Judge Jim Miraldi will put down his gavel and pick up his guitar.

He and the other members of the rock band Just Us, will hold court at the House of Blues, 308 Euclid Ave., Cleveland, in a special fundraiser, Jam for Justice. The concert will benefit Legal Aid of Northeast Ohio, which serves the counties of Lorain, Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake and Ashtabula.

“It does a lot of great work for the poor. If I’m going to perform, it’s to help other people,” Miraldi said.

The fundraiser runs from 5 to 8 p.m. Each of the four bands is led by a judge or an attorney, and each band plays 25 minutes. Just Us will be the first band to perform, kicking off the show at 5:45 p.m. Admission is \$40 per person and includes food and drinks.

The other three bands are from Cuyahoga County: the John Hanely Band, Rule 11 and the Sanctions, and Faith & Whiskey.

Tickets are available [online](#).

Miraldi discussed the need for the Jam for Justice fundraiser.

“Legal Aid volunteers and staff attorneys enter clients’ lives when those lives are at a momentous crossroads. Their clients are low-income people, 70 percent of them women, who are confronted with a legal problem that, if left unresolved, will result in loss of housing, education, income, food, safety or family stability. If they cannot help themselves, the odds are that their circumstances will continue to spiral downward. Legal Aid stops the spiral, and helps redirect clients’ lives down a better path,” Miraldi said.

A dedicated Beatles fan from back in the day, the 62-year-old Miraldi and his band members had to learn at least one Rolling Stones’ song for the House of Blues gig.

“Each band performing that night has to play a Rolling Stones song,” Miraldi said. “I wasn’t really a Rolling Stones fan. The Beatles, definitely. So, we’re doing ‘Jumping Jack Flash.’ After learning the song, I found out there’s more to the Stones’ music than I first thought.”

During a recent rehearsal at a remote location in Lorain County, Miraldi and his musical crew practiced songs by the likes of Steely Dan and The Beatles.

By day, they are professional, white-collar types — attorneys and doctors and the like — but each member transformed into high-caliber professional musicians, totally in tune, musically and emotionally, with each song they performed.

Miraldi's love of performing in a band started while he was in high school.

"My friend, Dale Pincura, and I started a folk group in high school. His dad, by the way, was a common pleas court judge, John D. Pincura," Miraldi recalled. "In college, I was in a folk rock band and we toured five or six states. We did a lot of Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young and James Taylor and some original stuff."

"Music is therapy for me," said Miraldi, who is as musically dexterous on lead guitar, bass and banjo as he is on keyboards, soaring skillfully through the jazzy riffs of Steely Dan's "Deacon Blues."

"I think everybody should have a hobby or therapy. Music is a great release for me and something to look forward to. It relieves stress. Music is just a great part of our society and people get enjoyment from it. It takes me back in time. It's a great way to connect with people," Miraldi said.

"As a judge, I play with a lot of different musicians. Music grounds me. It's opened up a lot of doors and removed a lot of barriers. As a judge, it's important to keep your feet on the ground. Rock 'n' roll has a leveling effect," Miraldi said.

As for this latest group excursion into the wonderful world of rock and roll, Miraldi said it all began about six years ago.

"Dale and I wanted to get something going back then. We play now mainly to raise money for 'Music on a Mission,' a charity that provides music therapy to various shut-ins," Miraldi said.

"We were asked to perform at the House of Blues along with three other bands of lawyers or judges. We're the first ones to go on. We each play a half-hour set. It's cool to be playing at the House of Blues. We're kind of excited to be at that venue," Miraldi said.

The last song, or group of songs, in their set, are the half-dozen Beatles' melodies on side two of their Abbey Road album that connect to each other.

Appropriately enough, the song collection, called "The End," features the memorable last line, "And in the end, the love you take is equal to the love you make."

The members of Just Us are:

- Jim Miraldi, common please court judge, keyboards, guitar and banjo
- Dale Pincura, assistant groundskeeper at Lakewood Country Club, guitar and vocals
- Melinda Brunner, principal of Olmsted Falls Pre-School and Kindergarten, vocals
- James Rosecrans, drug counselor for the juvenile court system, bass guitar
- Angela Wu, attorney and executive director of Zion Community Development Corp., Oberlin, violin, keyboard and vocals

- Dr. Tom Dresing, cardiologist with the Cleveland Clinic, drums
- Gerard Parisi, technician for Bell and Howell, percussion and drums
- Ed Ferraro, owner of Buckeye Sheet Metal, Lorain, harmonica.

Joining the band for the House of Blues engagement are Junior Gonzales, playing electric guitar, and Dan Canalos, owner-operator of Soundwaves Recording, playing keyboards.

Unlike the Rolling Stones, who initially refused to share their songlist with film director Martin Scorsese during the making of the movie, "Shine a Light," Judge Jim Miraldi was upfront about his song list:

- 'Dream' by Blue Sky Riders
- 'Tell Me Why' by The Beatles
- 'Runaway,' the Bonnie Raitt version
- 'Nick of Time' by Bonnie Raitt
- 'Deacon Blues' by Steely Dan
- 'What Hurts the Most' by Rascal Flatts
- The medley from The Beatles Abbey Road album: 'You Never Give Me Your Money,' 'Sun King,' 'Mean Mr. Mustard,' 'Polythene Pam,' 'She Came In Through the Bathroom Window,' 'Golden Slumbers,' 'Carry That Weight' and 'The End.'

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