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 remembered 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 out the stage. Local band, Revival rounds out the stage.

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out the line-up featuring Avis Berry, Jeff Davis, Chris Skene, Lyndon Thacker, Aliljah Motika and Dillion 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 Gerswin and the Beach Boys. Choreography runs through her head when Tchaikovsky’s The Nutcracker plays, and she takes her sons to see the Tallahassee Ballet and most enjoyed performance every year.

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 mother’s name.

“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.”

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