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By:

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ELi photo by Raymond Holt

Near the corner of Chittenden Drive and Orchard Street in East Lansing, there stands a simple brick building with white trim that carries a rich history. At first glance, the building doesn't look like much, but its importance as a community resource is as rich as the history held within.

For 45 years now, the Orchard Street Pump House has served as the site of the annual Bailey Ice Cream Social. This year's social is scheduled for 6:30-8:30 p.m. Wednesday, and is produced and funded by the Orchard Street Pump House Organization. (In case of inclement weather, the event will be held Thursday at the same time.)

The Bailey Neighbors and Friends serve as the hosts. Residents can also sign up or renew their membership with the Bailey Community Association.

The building dates back to the 1930s, and once served as the pump station for the City of East

Lansing Fire Department.

Pump House board member Dudley "Smitty" Smith says the Pump House is a valuable gathering spot for the surrounding neighborhoods, and the social is a chance for neighbors to take a breath, watch the kids play, and catch up.

"This year is the 45th social," Smith said. "The Orchard Street Pump House Organization started it, and we like to entertain the kids in early summer, and have some fun. Ice cream socials are an American tradition! It also serves as an opportunity for past Bailey residents who have moved to a different neighborhood to come back and catch up with their friends and former neighbors."

Besides plenty of ice cream, this year's social will feature a performance by the Matt Bliton Band, and Shenanigans the Clown will be on hand to provide balloon animals for the kids. Attendees are encouraged to bring a dish to pass, but it's not required.

Bliton, as well as a couple other members of his band, are residents of the Bailey Neighborhood. Bliton and his band recently released a new CD and recently performed at Pumpstock in June.

Fab Four social was one to remember

Smith, who also helps to book the popular Pump House Concerts and has been on the Pump House Board since 2000, says he has a lot of fond memories from the social. One in particular involved a musical tribute to the Fab Four from England.

"I think it was eight years ago that we had our first local rock cover band, which was a Beatles tribute band," Smith said. "They were a lot of fun dressing the part, and really taking the entertainment value of the Ice Cream Social up a notch. We've had this sort of entertainment every year since."

Along with concerts, the Pump House also hosts classes for martial arts, as well as yoga, and many other meetings. The Pump House is a popular location for open houses for recent graduates, often hosting two in one weekend.

Smith is quick to point out that the social is not a fundraiser, but the Pump House has done some local fundraising which will go toward building repairs.

The concerts will also continue, but will be held less frequently this year, according to Smith.

"The Orchard Street Pump House has done some local fundraising, and worked with the City of East Lansing to execute some needed building repairs, including a new roof," Smith said. "This will happen sometime in the next year or two. Other than that, we will continue to provide a great location for East Lansing people to host events, parties, and groups."

For more information, visit the Bailey Neighbors and Friends, East Lansing [2], page on Facebook.

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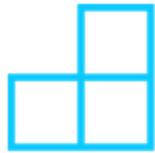
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