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Spirit Fest brings top Christian bands to Corpus Christi

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CORPUS CHRISTI — Christian music lovers who could only imagine what it would be like to see MercyMe on the same concert lineup as Jeremy Camp and Switchfoot can imagine no more.

Spirit Fest, one of the largest family friendly festivals in South Texas, is making its debut in Corpus Christi this Veterans Day weekend with a jam-packed day full of music and fun for the whole family.

In addition to Dove Award-winning and Grammy nominated artists MercyMe, Jeremy Camp and Switchfoot, the festival also will feature top-notch performances from Salvador, Jaci Velasquez, Shaun Groves, David Crowder, and illusionist Brock Gill.

The festival's mission is to activate the spirit of Christ in the community. The event also will feature arts and crafts and a large children's area with slides, rides and moon jumps, as well as street performers, ministry booths, parades, a fireworks display and music from local Christian bands.

"I love the festival environment," Crowder said via phone from his home in Atlanta. "It's almost like a family environment with everybody working together. There's a lot of commonality there, so it's just fun to get to appreciate music and the people that are making it."

Crowder, who recently parted with his group, the David Crowder Band, will showcase his trademark sound during Spirit Fest that incorporates upright bass, fiddle, cello, mandolin and banjo.

"It's really fun because it's that traditional music made for sitting on the front porch with a bunch of people singing together," Crowder said. "The thing I love about music is it shifts our awareness to the reality that we live and breathe in the very presence of God."

As part of its integration and promotion in Corpus Christi over the past few months, Spirit Fest has partnered in helping five local ministries: Taking Back the Streets in the Name of Jesus Ministries, the Corpus Christi Food Bank, South Texas Children's Home, Mission 911 and most recently, Corpus Christi Metro Ministries, for which Spirit Fest is helping to collect toys for the 20 children currently living in Metro Ministries' shelters.

"We want to make sure every one of our children has a good Christmas so Spirit Fest's help is very timely and very much appreciated," said Patty Clark, chief executive officer of Corpus Christi Metro Ministries.

Spirit Fest's main partnership is with a ministry called Compassion International, which helps impoverished children through sponsorships. Anyone who visits the Spirit Fest website and signs up with Compassion will get VIP tickets to the festival, said Spirit Fest founder Lowell McGregor.

Festivalgoers who buy tickets at regular price also will be eligible for a free child's ticket for every general admission ticket purchased. Buyers who purchase reserved tickets will be eligible for children's tickets at half price. In honor of Veterans Day, Gold Star families and wounded warriors and their families get into the festival free, while veterans will receive a \$5 discount. All military-related discounts are good at the door, McGregor said.

Funds from ticket sales will be used to cover the festival's expenses.

Spirit Fest is operated under the nonprofit umbrella of Walk by Faith Ministries, a registered concert ministry whose aim is to share the gospel of Jesus Christ.

McGregor is already working on next year's festival, which he plans to hold again in Corpus Christi and Austin.

"We hope in the future to expand outside of Texas," said McGregor, a Washington concert promoter who worked for years in the secular music industry before becoming a Christian.

Dell Diamond and Whataburger Field are owned by Ryan Sanders Baseball, which according to J.J. Gottsch, vice president of Ryan Sanders Entertainment, prides itself on providing quality family entertainment.

"(Spirit Fest) really fit within the parameters of what we look for, and we wanted to bring the event back again but do it this time in Corpus Christi as well," Gottsch said.

If You Go

What: Spirit Fest Corpus Christi 2012

Where: Whataburger Field, 734 N. Port Avenue

When: Noon to 9:30 p.m. Saturday (Doors open at 11 a.m.)

Cost: \$25/general admission; \$75/VIP; Groups as low as \$15; Buy tickets online at www.4DTixx.com

Information: 361-561-4665 or visit spiritfestcorpuschristi.com

Caption: CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Illusionist Brock Gill will perform on Saturday at Spirit Fest at Whataburger Field. Other performers include Salvador, Jaci Velasquez, Shaun Groves and David Crowder.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

David Crowder will perform on Saturday at Spirit Fest at Whataburger Field. Other performers include Salvador, Jaci Velasquez, Shaun Groves and MercyMe.

Christian supergroup MercyMe will perform on Saturday at Spirit Fest at Whataburger Field. Other performers include Salvador, Jaci Velasquez, Shaun Groves and David Crowder.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Jeremy Camp will perform on Saturday at Spirit Fest at Whataburger Field. Other performers include Salvador, Jaci Velasquez, Shaun Groves and David Crowder.

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