

# Welcome to the ChopHouse: How a group of students began creating DIY venues for local artists and musicians

By Hope Davis, October 28th, 2025



*Image courtesy of Olivia Sztandarowski*

BOONE, NC – Most nights in the town of Boone are relatively quiet and tame. Unless you're Spencer Armstrong, and it's your buddy Sean's birthday.

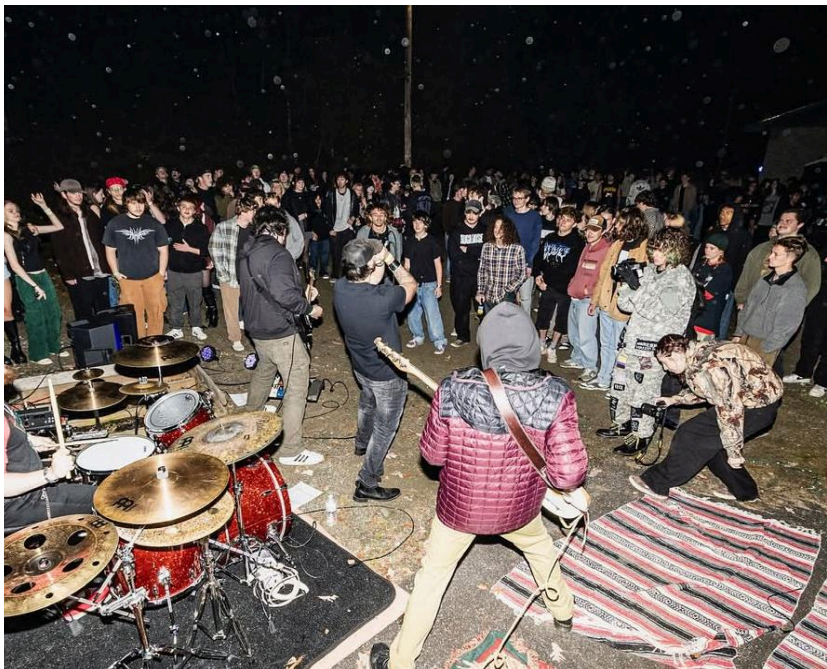
When the 22-year-old Appalachian State student sent out flyers for his roommate's birthday bash, he expected maybe 60 people to show up. By the end of the night, 60 had turned into more than 300. The front lawn of 148 Incline Drive became ChopHouse, the popular do-it-yourself music venue around town, with Armstrong and his friends as its new founding fathers.

The friends charged only \$5 for tickets at the door in hopes to pay off the bands they hired, and ended up with a wildly successful night. The group began throwing more and more events, drawing larger crowds of people each time. Seemingly overnight, ChopHouse had rapidly morphed into a buzzing hub for community, music and a good old-fashioned party.

The group now hosts local artists and bands all over Boone and surrounding areas, with a focus on showcasing up and coming talent. Building community plays the largest role in ChopHouse's mission, bringing individuals from all walks of life together around a shared passion for music and the arts.

"We ended up making enough money, obviously to pay the bands, that was the whole goal," said Armstrong. "We realized that it was a really profitable avenue, and so we decided to not only monetize it, but try to expand it."

**"No stage too small, and we make one if there isn't."**



Shortly after their second show, Armstrong and his friends were evicted from the house where they hosted their initial debut. However, rather than it being a result of the expected noise complaints or for gathering such a large crowd of people, it came from collecting commercial revenue on a residential property.

*Image courtesy of Isabelle Green*

“It would be no different than opening up a barbershop in your house,” said Armstrong. “The cops saw that we were collecting ticket revenue to pay the bands, and that's illegal.”

Armstrong says that the eviction was no surprise. He alleges a pattern of long disputes and harassment from the landlords as well as a local property management company that began months prior to the first party.

“They were going to evict us one way or another, so might as well go out with a bang,” said Armstrong. “They were going to find a reason, so we gave them one.”

The loss of their homebase didn't deter the group, in fact, it encouraged them to reach out to other local businesses and spaces to host these do-it-yourself concerts, allowing ChopHouse to expand more than ever before.

The team has hosted events in spaces ranging from the parking lot of a popular taco truck in the center of downtown Boone, to Zionville Ramp Co., an indoor skate park right along the Tennessee border, with many offering their houses as venues in between.

“I think the thing that definitely sets us apart is it's never in the same spot, we don't have one specific home,” said Armstrong. “It's the same crowd meeting up, and you're at somebody else's house all the time.”



Image courtesy of Olivia Sztandarowski

Grace Phillips, an Appalachian State University student and long-time attendee of ChopHouse events, says the uniqueness of ChopHouse comes from the talent they showcase.

“Everybody is just there for a good, casual, fun time,” said Philips. “They always have different bands showing, so not only does it give a chance to showcase them and their work, but you get to see what other students our age are creating and currently working on, all while going to school here and being in this environment all together.”

Philips recalls her struggles as a college student under the age of 21 who wanted to see live music and local talent. Many of the local music venues in Boone, such as Boone Saloon, only allow for patrons above the legal drinking age.

“It makes it difficult in Boone to even have music events for people that aren't 21,” said Philips. “That’s the beauty of ChopHouse, they give everybody the chance to show up.”

Armstrong estimates the biggest turnout at one of their shows to be around 1,500 people. However, it is not the crowd size or revenue that holds focus for the group. Engaging the community with local musicians and artists remains the main goal of ChopHouse, showcasing not just up-and-coming bands at their shows, but also providing a space for local artists to sell goods like jewelry and clothing.

“That's the ultimate goal, is everybody kind of uses us a stepping stool, that kind of foot up they need progress and move their careers forward,” said Armstrong. “And they have a good time doing it.”

Whether it be in a backyard or a bar, the shared passion for music can be felt zipping from the band's guitars to the moving feet of the crowd. It is a come as you are space that provides people with a chance to let loose and simply just be themselves.

The group's most recent show was a Halloween sustainability event held at Tapp Room, a staple bar in Boone nightlife, which brought a crowd of more than 200 attendees. Armstrong, who is a sustainability development major himself, aimed to put on a 90% sustainable show, with 10% of sales going directly to Appalachian State's sustainability department.

“We capitalize on the diversity of Boone. Every show has a story or multiple stories with its own unique faces associated with it,” said Armstrong. “I’ve made so many new friends through this whole process. It truly is a massive family, like the biggest family you could ever imagine.”

