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August 30, 2006

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Rockit a vehicle for youths to be seen, heard

BY DAN NEWMAN
Staff Writer



MIDDLETOWN - Thanks to a mentor of his, Bruce Gallipani was very much into music at a young age. Five years ago, he wanted to extend the favor to the youth of the township community by helping out at the St. Mary's Church talent show.

"I helped to run the talent show and got some bands together," Gallipani said. "I decided that I wanted to do even more as far as helping kids that want to get involved with music. I think mentoring is very important and I wanted to help out."

About two-and-a-half years ago, Gallipani started Rockit For Kids, a nonprofit organization intended to provide young people with the opportunity to perform live music. On Saturday, musicians ages 8-15 got their chance to shine on stage at Middletown High School North at a concert sponsored by the township's Cultural and Arts Council.

About 350 were in attendance at the show, which Gallipani termed, "a chance to bring something good into the community."

"Things went really well on Saturday. For all the kids that are out there, we want to give them a chance to show their stuff," Gallipani said. "Hopefully, this will serve as motivation for the kids to take things even further."

For seven weeks, many of the students that participated in Saturday's show went to a music camp at Croydon Hall, sponsored by the Cultural and Arts Council to fine tune their skills in time for their performance.

"The kids worked very hard at the camp and at home as well. They've really been putting a lot of time into this and it shows."

When it comes to area music schools, the Bensonhurst Brooklyn native went out of his way to thank one person in particular.

"John Albino of Absolute Music [Hazlet] has been such a tremendous supporter of this whole thing," Gallipani said. "He has helped me out so much, along with my administrative assistant Joan Bent, and our assistant music director Mike Zdeb."

Initially, Gallipani said he had a lot of support but "some people fell off." Still, he says he has plenty of support and help from community members who are also determined to see the organization reach greater heights.

"It's like a five-year plan and I am halfway through it. I like where we are right now and I look forward to watching our local kids get better musically."

For more information on the organization, visit www.rockitforkids.org.



Allison LaRoche, Belford, 8, sings at the Rockit for Kids concert.



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