

Around Town: Orchestra "swings" into action

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By Bart Fisher
Staff Writer

Simply Swing really had to "swing" into action quickly to help famed TV producer Gordon Elliott raise funds for education recently in New York. Closer to home, the local orchestra kicks off the first of its 11 performances in the Farmington Bank Community Concert Series Thursday night at 6:30 p.m. at Berlin's Veterans Park.

Musical director and former Herald reporter Joe LaRosa explained the logistics of the group's high-profile Empire State gig to Around Town. "We were contacted by one of Mr. Elliott's staff members eight days before the event and asked if Simply Swing was ... interested in playing June 2 in Millbrook, N.Y., for a charity event." A half-hour later Elliott himself called to "seal the deal and we began working to pull it off."

The event benefited the Knowledge Is Power Program, a national network of free, open-enrollment, college-preparatory public schools with a track record of preparing students in underserved communities for success in college and in life.

As part of a day-long series of activities, the Simply Swing combo provided music for the cocktail hour and during dinner. Simply Swing's full 10-piece orchestra opened up after dinner and traded sets with a rock group and a group that Mr. Elliott sat in with.

LaRosa said the locally-based swing orchestra's performance really came off well. "At the end of the night," he said, "Mr. Elliott was really pleased and already talking about having us back next year."

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If you're old enough to remember the heyday of drive-in theaters, especially those in our area, like the Pike and the Hartford Drive-In, you'll want to circle July 13 on your calendar. That's the day, well, actually the night when Raising Berlin Inc. and the Berlin Parks and Recreation Department plan to host a free outdoor summer movie event at the Sage Park Baseball Field.

The film, which will be shown at approximately 8:15 p.m., hasn't been named yet, but you can be sure it will be family friendly fare. The rain date is July 14.

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Although last week's unseasonably cool temperatures and overcast skies undoubtedly kept places like Hammonasset and Rocky Neck quite empty, readers are still responding to our question about favorite "beach reads."

Janice Homar of Farmington "always brings along a good mystery." She's particularly partial to "James Patterson and the Kellermans, both Faye and Jonathan."

Maybe you've already heard about this year's Golden Kielbasa Veterans Open Golf Tournament, but it's certainly worth repeating. The Sept. 21 tourney at Timberlin Golf Club will honor New Britain native and Purple Heart recipient Corporal Manny Jimenez.

The field is expected to fill quickly. But you can register on-line for the event which raises funds for various veterans' causes and includes a post-tourney barbecue at the VFW Post #511 Picnic Pavilion in New Britain. For all the info, check out the tournament website: www.goldenkielbasa.org.

It's kind of oxymoronic when you think about it. The license plate on a car, repeat CAR, seen on Main Street in Middletown, reads: "CYCLN."

Have a great week.

Feel free to contribute to Around Town by e-mailing Bart Fisher at: Hardwarecityhistorian@yahoo.com or by regular mail c/o The Herald, One Herald Square, New Britain, CT 06051.