The second concert of the Bear River Concert Serious will be June 27th at 7 PM in the Sill Barn on the Camp Courageous property. The second of seven scheduled concerts will be featuring Small Potatoes.

Small Potatoes, the Chicago based folk duo of Jacquie Manning and Rich Prezioso, say it has taken them years of careful indecision to develop a repertoire they describe as "Celtic to Cowboy." Superb musicianship and award-winning songwriting, and a strong sense of tradition has made them as Dirty Linen Magazine said, "one of the most polished, inventive and entertaining shows on the circuit." Get more information about Small Potatoes at http://www.smallpotatoesmusic.com
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Monticello orchardist and general contractor, Douglas Monk, is partnering with Camp Courageous, The Greater Cedar Rapids Community Foundation, and the Grant Wood Country Foundation for the Arts, to co-host the “2009 Bear River Concert Series.” The seven concerts, from May through November, will be held in the rustic Sill Barn on the Camp Courageous property, with the exception of the September concert, “Applejam,” which will be at the Monk’s property. Each concert brings nationally recognized talent to Monticello, Iowa.

The music series began as a dream for Douglas Monk and his wife, Micaela, when they planted their apple orchard in April of 2002. “Can’t you just picture trees laden with red and yellow apples, families coming out for a day in the country, and live music in the orchard?” Douglas would say to his wife. But Monk didn’t want to wait five years before the trees bore fruit, so they hosted their first music festival the following September, calling it “Applejam.”

In 2003, due to the weather, they hosted the event in their 100-year-old post-and-beam barn. The venue started with an open mike, followed by a large pot luck, and finished with a professional musician. Every year, Applejam got a little bigger, a little more polished. Musicians began getting wind of Applejam from as far away as Nashville, Tennessee and England.

In December of 2008, Monk’s wife, Micaela, spotted a notice in the Monticello Express regarding the Jones County Endowment Fund, which stated a grant was available to be used for such things as “recreation, tourism, improving the quality of life and enhancing the economic well-being of Jones County residents.”

Doug and Micaela met with Scott and Michelle Dalziel, two singer-songwriters who had previously performed at Applejam, to discuss applying for the grant. Michelle suggested that rather than envision just one event, why not do a whole series of concerts and name it after the Maquoketa River which flows through this part of the state. “Did you know the Native Americans called the river ‘the Bear River’ (Maquoketa River) after all the black bear in the area?” she said.

Melissa Stelhorn, a family friend, suggested it might be mutually advantageous to partner with Camp Courageous, a non-profit camp that serves over 5,000 individual of all ages with disabilities each year. Since the camp runs on donations they could direct a portion of the proceeds toward the camp. In January, Doug, Micaela, and Melissa sat down with Charlie Becker at Camp Courageous to share their idea. Out of this came the “2009 Bear River Concert

Series."

The first concert on May 30th with Scott and Michelle Dalziel and Beth Wood was well attended.

The second Concert will be June 27th at 7 PM with Small Potatoes (http://www.smallpotatoesmusic.com). July 18th at 7 PM with Gayla Drake Paul (http://www.skep.com/gdpaul). August 29th at 7 PM with GDP3. September 12th "Applejam" at Monk's orchard at 4:30 PM with local artists and Fran Snyder (http://fransnyder.com). October 31 at 7 PM with Joe Jenks (http://www.joejencks.com). November 28th at 7 PM with John Smith (http://www.johnsmithmusic.com).

While reservations are not required, they are strongly recommended by calling (319) 465-4069. You can also get more information from www.bearriverconcerts.com or at the camp's web site at www.campcourageous.org .

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