

Written by Vanessa McNeely  
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Central Community High School alum Elliott Beenk and his band, *Chasing Shade*, return to his alma mater Friday, Aug. 16, to present a back-to-school concert at 7 p.m. at the Central Performing Arts Center at the high school in DeWitt.

This indie-beach-blues group based in Iowa City has shared the stage with some of the top acts in the country including Bon Jovi, Pepper, G. Love & Special Sauce, Rusted Root, Lissie and Mason Jennings.

The band is made up of University of Iowa graduates and a current student. Griffen Harris is the lead vocalist and plays drums and acoustic guitar; Beenk plays lead guitar and is backup vocalist; Trent Harrison plays trumpet; and Jonathan Birdsall, saxophone. The band also will have a bass player, to be named, for the DeWitt concert.

*Chasing Shade* is not a typical college rock band. Its members create a sound that digs deeper than the usual Iowa City rock group.

"I think we identify as indie folk rock," Harris says. "We definitely have rock, we definitely have folk, but we also have a lot of blues influences, harmonies, and we dig jazz drumming."

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*Chasing Shade* recently completed a solar-powered tour across Iowa via bicycles during RAGBRAI (The Register's Annual Great Bicycle Ride Across Iowa). The band was self-contained, transporting all of its instruments via bicycle trailers and generating sustainable power from active solar panels on their trailers. The tour included impromptu shows during the ride in addition to nightly shows at overnight stops. The goal of the tour was to promote the harmony of cycling, music and the environment.

*Chasing Shade* also is committed to giving back to the community and promoting sustainability. The band has contributed to and performed at fundraisers benefiting Amnesty International, Habitat for Humanity and Engineers for a Sustainable World. In addition, *Chasing Shade* tries to be environmentally conscious with everything it does. The band recently led the "greening" of a music festival called Camp Euphoria.

The future of *Chasing Shade* is exciting. Soon the group plans to leave Iowa City, Beenk says. "We will move to Colorado or California or Europe or anywhere

. . . just somewhere we can grow and expand as musicians."

"We're going to chase the dream," Harris adds.

Tickets are \$5 each and will be available at the door. Doors open at 6 p.m.