



Elaine and Jim Psarras (YESFEST)



Jeremy Duchon and Molly Psarras (YESFEST)

Andy's Foundation "YESFEST"

The largest fundraiser in the short history of the Andy's Foundation was a trip back to the 1960s.

Called YESFEST, the event recalled an era that the younger benefit goers did not live through. There were more than enough "veterans" of the decade, however, who could share firsthand stories.

Less than two years old, Andy's Foundation was started by Elaine and Jim Psarras to combat the use of illegal drugs and the irresponsible use of legal drugs, especially among younger people. Through awareness and education, the foundation wants to increase communication between younger people and their parents since the most vulnerable ages are 10 to 22.

On the YESFEST invitation, BYOB meant "bring your own blanket." Many of the guests did just that and further entered into the spirit of the event by dressing in the era of the 1960s. There weren't many bellbottoms, but lots of jeans, free-flowing dresses, tie-dyed shirts and peace medallions that must have languished in dresser drawers for decades.

Held at the Psarras home in Shaker Heights, YESFEST's nearly 200 guests filled the spacious yard. Memorable images of the era appeared as decorations.

The talented sixties-sounding band Soul Candy was the perfect music choice. They entertained while guests sipped beer and wine and later danced. An array of gourmet picnic dinners and munchies completed the evening. Guests ranged in age from two-year-old Natalie Unger and her months-old brother to dozens of young people barely twenty and up to seniors.

Many of the younger people were friends of Andy Psarras whose death in January of 2004 was the genesis of Andy's Foundation. A victim of intoxication by heroin, Andy's parents were unaware of his drug use, and a large part of the foundation's mission is to make parents more proactive in talking to their children.

Joanna Connors, who wrote a series of stories about Andy in the "Plain Dealer," attended YESFEST as well as health professionals committed to emergency treatment of substance abusers. YESFEST was a beautifully themed celebration with a serious purpose behind it.

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY ART THOMAS



Peggy Zone Fisher and Jason Fisher (YESFEST)



Heather and Natalie Unger (YESFEST)