

Carnevale to benefit opera's outreach

After years of being involved with the Pizza Challenge in Toledo, the Toledo Opera decided it needed something different.

Having opted for a New Orleans Mardi Gras theme, officials decided to stage it at a new location, the 20-month-old Town Center at Levis Commons development on Ohio 25 in Perrysburg.

"Levis Commons is such a great place to have an outdoor event," said Renay Conlin, the executive director of the opera. "It's almost like a village."

And officials at Levis were also excited about working with the opera, she said.

The result is Carnevale Nights, June 9 and 10 from 6 to 11 p.m. each night. The event is a mix of music, food, drink and gambling. Admission is \$15. Call the opera at (419) 255-7464 or Levis Commons at (419) 931-8888.

The proceeds will benefit the opera's educational outreach.

Organizers worked with Blue Suit Records to arrange the entertainment. They booked Jefferson Starship as the June 9 act, Conlin said, because with a new event they wanted performers "with a lot of name recognition."

The music will start at 7:30 p.m.

The current edition of the Starship features Paul Kantner, a founder of band's original version Jefferson Airplane. It also includes several rock veterans from that period, Country Joe McDonald from Country Joe and the Fish; David Frieberg, co-founder of Quicksilver; Tom Constanten, the original pianist for the Grateful Dead; and Prairie Prince, of The Tubes. They'll join Starship regulars Slick Aguilar, Chris Smith, Linda Imperial and Diana Mangano. Mangano has sung the repertoire of the band's original female vocalist Grace Slick, since for the past 13 years. Slick, herself, retired from touring in 1989.

On Saturday the music will begin at 7 p.m. with Toledo bluesman Roman Griswold and Big Blues Bob Michaels accompanied by Voodoo Libido. The Motor City Rhythm and Blues Pioneers will follow at 8 p.m. The group features Joe Weaver, Stanley Mitchell and Kenny Martin, all of whom scored rhythm 'n' blues hits before the Motown label became synonymous with Detroit soul.

Zydeco star C.J. Chenier will headline the show with a 9 p.m. set. (See story this page.)

The event will also feature a variety of food offered by Town Center eateries as well as a wine garden, premium beers and a martini bar. Gaming activities include a raffle for big ticket items, Black Jack, Texas Hold 'Em and slot machines.