

NedFest on for 2012 despite death of founder 'Michigan Mike'

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Posted: 02/10/2012 09:31:46 PM MST
Updated: 02/11/2012 12:18:12 PM MST

Even after the death of its founder, "Michigan Mike" Torpie, the music will go on at NedFest in 2012.

The Peak to Peak Music Education Association and Friends of Michigan Mike will present the 14th annual NedFest this summer, ending uncertainty about the event's future after Torpie's death in November.

"Sentimentally, this event was very important to a lot of people," said Peter Fiori, who has been production manager for NedFest since its inception in 1996. "Mike had a lot of friends who wanted to see this continue."

The Peak to Peak Music Education Association is a nonprofit created by Torpie's friends and others associated with NedFest to run the event. A bluegrass festival held every summer in Nederland, NedFest has become one of the town's signature events.

The 13th annual NedFest included Leftover Salmon, various members of String Cheese Incident, David Grisman and Grateful Dead drummer Bill Kreutzmann.

The future of the festival was up in the air after Torpie's suicide, with the event falling under his estate. But with the permission of Torpie's parents, the event will continue.

Mike Torpie (PROVIDED PHOTO)

Fiori said the event is still in its early planning stages, and dates haven't been set. He said there will be some sort of tribute to

Torpie at this year's NedFest.

"I'm absolutely sure we will do something," he said. "This was his baby."

With Torpie at the helm, NedFest grew from a small gathering in his backyard to a three-day event that attracts thousands of fans to the shores of Barker Reservoir. Torpie had already been working on this year's festival when he committed suicide on Thanksgiving morning.

Fiori said the best way to honor Torpie would be to continue the event that he cared so much about.

"We just want to stick with the blueprint laid out by Mike and try to improve upon it every year, just as he always did," he said.

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