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Mardi Gras fun to come to Avon

By Amanda Stone

AVON-BY-THE-SEA — Locals will not have to travel far to enjoy the fun and excitement of Bourbon Street in New Orleans, as the Avon Education Foundation will soon host its own Mardi Gras celebration right here in the borough.

The Avon Education Foundation fundraiser is scheduled to start at 7 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 22 at the Avon Municipal Complex.

Tickets cost \$50 per person and can be purchased at the Bungalow Road and The Connolly Agency, both located on Main Street. Tickets may also be purchased by calling 732-925-4974, or online at www.avonbytheseafoundation.org or the night of the event.

Proceeds from the event will benefit the three-year-old foundation, which has the goal of promoting educational enrichment through programs and projects in the community.

Those who come out to the fundraiser will be able to enjoy an evening of casino style games, gift baskets, a silent auction and live music provided by the Pat Roddy Band. The event will also feature beer and wine, as well as New Orleans cuisine.

A highlight of the fundraiser for the foundation is the fact that the live music will be played over a new sound system in the municipal building — a donation the foundation recently made to the borough.

After raising enough money and receiving grants, the foundation recently presented the \$16,000 sound system to the board of commissioners.

Michele Gioia, foundation president, has said the sound system is something the community had asked for when foundation members discussed options for their donation to the borough.

"The sound system is a great example of how the foundation brings our community together," Ms. Gioia said. "In tandem with this system, the Avon Home and School Association has now purchased stage monitors to improve the school's choral performances in the building, and the town itself will be able to add elements for use at community events — such as the tree lighting and Memorial Day commemoration — that take place outside the

building."

Ms. Gioia said the Mardi Gras celebration will be a fun night for the entire community.

"This is a moment to celebrate the support and generosity of the entire community in pursuing our mission to develop enrichment opportunities in arts, culture, sports and continuing education for all the residents of the Avon," Ms. Gioia said.

Ms. Gioia said hosting fundraisers, such as the Mardi Gras celebration, will help the foundation continue its goal of giving back.

She said funds raised will allow the foundation to continue several of its ongoing programs, including adult education workshops, an after-school instrumental instruction program and providing teacher mini grants.

Ms. Gioia said she encouraged locals to join the foundation, including those with and without school-aged children.

"We clearly support our local school, but our mission is broader in that our goal is to promote educational enrichment through programs and projects for the entire community," said Ms. Gioia.

Photos

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Avon Education Foundation board members Susan Annitto [left] and Dolly Stolgitis, as well as several other board members, have been busy preparing for the foundation's upcoming Mardi Gras celebration fundraiser. The event is scheduled for Saturday, Feb. 22. *Photo courtesy AVON EDUCATION FOUNDATION*

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For additional information about the foundation, visit www.avonbytheseafoundation.org.

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