

SPOTLIGHT ONE PARTICULAR HARBOR

Playing at fundraiser personal for musician

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ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

SPRINGDALE — The late Ryan Gibson would have loved to see the Ray Johnston Band in concert.

Fast-growing in its popularity, the band plays a sort of upbeat bluesy rock reminiscent of Dave Matthews Band, Jimmy Buffett or Jack Johnson. Currently touring the South, Johnston and his group will be stopping at the Fayetteville Town Center on June 26, performing at the Ryan Gibson Foundation's ninth annual One Particular Harbor.

The foundation, named for one of Springdale's favorite sons, raises money for medical institutions in the hopes of finding a cure for leukemia, and front man Ray Johnston has benefited from its efforts. A leukemia patient, Johnston is taking tamibarotene, a clinical trial drug that's taken in pill form rather than intravenously.

That's perfect for someone on the road; the band is opening for Los Lonely Boys and The Fray on its current tour.

"When we play live, we play hard," says Johnston as he travels from a gig in Alabama to one in Louisiana. "We've got jazz influences, funk influences ... but every

show we play, I talk about the Ryan Gibson Foundation and what it's done for me.

"I wear a royal-blue bracelet that says RGE/RJB, like the kind Lance Armstrong [wears], and at shows I tell people to take all they want. It's neat to see people wear that."

Johnston, a former college basketball player at Alabama, was a 24-year-old loan officer and a season ticket-holder for the NBA's Dallas Mavericks when he was invited to try out for the Mavericks.

He earned a spot on See **GIBSON**, Page 3D



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Don Gibson has enlisted the Dallas-based Ray Johnston Band to perform at the Ryan Gibson Foundation's ninth annual One Particular Harbor event June 26 at the Fayetteville Town Center. Johnston, a leukemia patient, benefits directly from the work of the foundation, named for Gibson's son, who died in 2001.



Arkansas Democrat-Gazette/WILLIAM MOORE

Don Gibson's son, Ryan, a graduate of Springdale High School and Southern Methodist University in Dallas, died in 2001 after a six-year battle with leukemia. A group of Ryan's friends and family founded the Ryan Gibson Foundation, which raises money to help find a cure.

Gibson

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their summer-league team, but his basketball dreams ended when a lingering shin injury led to a leukemia diagnosis. Despite suffering kidney failure, seizures and collapsed lungs in subsequent years, Johnston formed his band in August 2009. (The band has been featured in the eight-part documentary *Ray Johnston Band: Road Diaries*, which airs on HDNet, a high-definition cable channel founded by Mavericks owner Mark Cuban.)

"I feel the best I have since 2004," Johnston says. "It's a great feeling getting to play for [the Ryan Gibson Foundation], for obvious reasons. I'm real fired up about it."

Johnston's amazing story is rivaled by that of the foundation. Ryan Gibson, a popular student at Springdale High and Southern Methodist University in Dallas, died in 2001 after a six-year struggle with leukemia.

The Gibson family, along with a group of Ryan's fraternity brothers, established the organization in Dallas, the city that annually plays host to the Crown Ball, its signature event. The Ray Johnston Band performed at this year's ball.

The foundation has seven chapters nationwide, including the one in Arkansas. Last year's One Particular Harbor raised \$80,000, and previ-

ous events have raised much more.

Don Gibson, Ryan's father, has seen Johnston's band play twice, at both the Crown Ball and George's Majestic Lounge in Fayetteville. He's thrilled to have it onboard this year.

"He's got an easy sound and is just a cool guy," says Gibson, the president and chief executive officer of Legacy Bank in Springdale. "All his e-mails he sends me, he signs off as 'God first.' He is very positive.

"Ryan would have loved Ray Johnston. He loved Buffett, Dave Matthews, Garth Brooks."

Ryan Gibson's love of laid-back rock is reflected in the style of One Particular Harbor. It's a decidedly casual affair, where tropical attire is the norm.

Catering Unlimited will be providing the food, and there is an impressive list of silent-auction items, including two tickets to the Masters golf tournament and a Masters cap autographed by 15 tournament winners.

"It's the one event that flip-flops are not only permissible, but encouraged," Don Gibson says. Special sponsors, known as "harbor captains," underwrite the event.

"Every dollar from tickets, the auction, beverages, it goes to the Ryan Gibson Foundation."

For more information on One Particular Harbor, e-mail dgibbie@cox.net or visit trgf.org.