



December 28, 2009

Bands play on for Robby at celebration

By Elizabeth M. Mack
DEMOCRAT STAFF WRITER

Robby Redding would have been celebrating his 28th birthday Sunday. But even in his absence family and friends came together to pay tribute to his life.

His mother, Leslie Redding, said that after a car accident in February 2000 left him paralyzed they began throwing big birthday celebrations for Robby — gathering all of their family and friends together. He died in April 2008 after falling asleep in his wheelchair and suffocating.

To continue a tradition of the gatherings her son loved, the Reddings hosted a benefit with local bands gathering family and friends in his honor.

It's called Robby's Reef — a fundraiser to build a reef in memory of Robby. The second annual event was held Sunday evening at the American Legion next to Lake Ella.

Robby's father, Charley Redding, said they came up with the idea because Robby loved the beach and he had a lot of friends who played in bands.

"We have a place at the beach in Saint Teresa," Charley said. "He would take the boat out all the time and go fishing. He loved it."

Calvin Hunt, one of Robby's good friends, remembered how they would spend the summer together at Saint Teresa.

"We basically grew up together on that beach," Hunt said. "We used to run around as toddlers together. We would go swimming, feed the flounders and go fishing. We still went even after the accident."

Hunt said he and Robby's other friends still frequent the beach to go fishing.

"It would be great to have the reef," Hunt said, mentioning that Robby's ashes were spread at that beach. "The water is shallow and that way every time we go fishing we can dive and see the reef. It'll be like he is a part of it."

Leslie added that being at Saint Teresa was Robby's most favorite thing in the world, aside from listening to his friends in the band Dogwood Jams.

"He called himself their manager," Leslie said, noting that he was always with the band's members. "I have so much footage of their practices because he was always videotaping them."

Seven local bands performed at Sunday's event; Hard Miles, So What!, Keith Renfroe, Fried Turkey's, Dick Hosford, Ray Wiley & Friends, Low Flying Planes and Dogwood Jam.

The goal was to raise \$30,000 — which is how much it take to build the reef. The Reddings have raised about half of their goal.

Robby's reef will be in the waters of the Saint Teresa beach, next to the reef established on behalf of his cousin, Nicholas Cureton. The two often fished together.

Leslie said even after the reef is built they will still host the party. Hunt added that it wouldn't seem right not to.

"This is the type of tradition that even after the reef is built it would still be like this," Hunt said. "This is absolutely the most fitting way to celebrate. Robby loved getting everybody. He was the life of the party and everyone loved to be around him."
