

Salsa And Support

Fundraiser To Benefit Puerto Rico Environmental Groups

By JUSTIN McILWEE

Daily News-Record

For Karen Lee, James Madison University professors Les Grady and Dave Pruett made quite an impact on her while taking a five-week class on climate change through JMU's Lifelong Learning Institute.

Lee had always had an interest in climate change, but it wasn't until she retired that she was able to light that spark, and it was Grady and Pruett who provided the match.

"I think the pair of them did what you might call a one-two punch," Lee said. "Grady presented the scientific fact; it put into great detail where the problems are, what the potential solutions are. It gets your brain ready; here are all these facts, now what do I do about them? Dave did the two-punch; when you know something, you really need to do something."

After the five-week session ended, Lee invited a small group of students from the class, including Grady and Pruett, over to her house for one more meeting to discuss what they could all do about climate change. The group ended up meeting on a regular basis, and their first act is to host a concert to help benefit the installation of solar panels into communities of hurricane-damaged Puerto Rico.

"We had met for a number of months and finally decided we were ready to do a project," Lee, who is the leader of the group, said. "We talked over different ideas and this is the one we liked the most. It's not only having to do with the environment, but it's also humanitarian. There are hundreds of communities that have no power whatsoever."

The benefit concert will take place on Friday, April 20, from 7 to 9 p.m. at Community Mennonite Church in Harrisonburg. The two groups that will benefit from the concert are Resilient Power Puerto Rico, which, according to its website, "starts with nimble, targeted efforts to deliver solar generators to the most underserved areas of Puerto Rico as a relief measure to get communities powered up and back in contact, with a

"Both of them are doing very similar projects in that they are acquiring or building solar panels and the battery setup as inexpensively as they can," Lee said. "Their people go down to Puerto Rico and they meet with Puerto Ricans they've partnered with and teach them the setup and operation of this. They usually set it up in a community center — somewhere the whole community can access."

The concert will include performances by Bobby Driver and Trudy Cole, Doug Hendren and salsa dance instruction by Trio Enka. During the intermission of the music, guests will be offered refreshments, be able to visit booths from the eight sponsors of the event and view slides showing before and after Hurricane Maria pictures of Puerto Rico. The event is free and guests are encouraged to make a donation.

As Lee explained, having a group like the one that sprang from the JMU class is vital because its a catalyst for doing something about major issues. In fact, as of Thursday afternoon, Lee was having solar panels installed at her Bridgewater home as a step toward finding a solution for climate change.

"Our group has helped continue the process of knowing what to do and knowing that the very best thing you can do is to become part of a group," she said. "There are so many wonderful national and regional groups. You start learning the best route to take, then you as a citizen can vote responsibly, email or call your senators and representatives. It's only together that we really have power."

For more information about the concert or about the climate change group, contact Karen Lee at 540-820-1219 or leekr@jmu.edu.

Community Mennonite Church is at 70 S. High St.

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planned evolution into longterm disaster-preparedness and clean-energy solutions to impact the entire island.”

The other organization the benefit is raising money for is Libre Solar, a group that aims to provide solar electricity generation and storage.



Blues and swing duo Bobby Driver (right) and Trudy Cole perform at a house concert. The two will do a set at a benefit concert on Friday, April 20.

Courtesy of Sandra Parks