

Block Party In The 'Burg Back For 2nd Year

By **MARTIN CIZMAR**

Daily News-Record

Last year it was an elective. This year attendance at Saturday's Block Party in the 'Burg is a required class — at least for incoming Eastern Mennonite University students.

The party, now in its second year, aims to bring students from EMU and James Madison University together with townies for an afternoon of entertainment on Court Square. The party's free.

Jamie Marsh, public relations manager for Harrisonburg Downtown Renaissance, the event's sponsor, says the event was needed to introduce students to downtown.

"We started it because we got some disappointing surveys back," she said. "College students didn't seem to be aware of downtown until their junior or even their senior year."

Of course Marsh hopes the event, now an official part of orientation for both EMU and JMU, is more fun than the general science requirement.

To make sure it is, they've lined up three local rock acts, a pizza eating contest and shows by JMU's break dancing and martial arts clubs. There's also free hotdogs, samples from downtown restaurants, a tightrope walker and make-

your-own lattes.

Downtown tours, popular last year, will also be back.

"I think everyone who attended the event took one last year," Marsh said. "We feel like even if the numbers weren't as high as we'd hoped, people who were there really got to see the downtown district."

HDR is hoping the numbers will be up this year. EMU students are required to go. JMU orientation leaders will encourage students to drop by before the Dukes' 6 p.m. kickoff against Bloomsburg. There's more to do this year, she said, partly because downtown businesses are throwing their support behind it.

"Last year was an opportunity to prove to them that students would come downtown — if told where it

was."

Headlining act Shapiro, a Harrisonburg-based rock band, says it's a great place to play.

"We like it because it's a different kind of show — a change of place," said frontman Jeremy Teter.

"The audience is very eclectic," said bassist Carl Shapiro. "It's a good chance to play for different people and it's fun to be outside."

Block Party Details

Noon: Red River Roller-coaster, juggler Jack Marmorstein and a JMU martial arts group

1 p.m.: Nathaniel Baker

2 p.m.: JMU Breakdancing Team

2:30 p.m.: Trent Wagler & the Steel Wheels

3:30 p.m.: Luigi's pizza eating contest

4 p.m.: Shapiro