

the BLOCK party

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Harrisonburg, students. Students, Harrisonburg. To foster a positive and profitable relationship between residents and students, Harrisonburg Downtown Renaissance is sponsoring the first ever "Block Party in the Burg," from 3-8 p.m. on Saturday.

"Some students don't even know about downtown until their junior year," said Jamie Marsh, public relations manager of HDR. "We want them to know now."

The Block Party, which will be held on Court Square, will feature booths sponsored by local merchants.

Marsh also hopes that the party will help college students feel at home in their new town.

"We're interested in making them feel welcome," she said.



Courtesy Photo

JMU student Nathaniel Baker recorded his album "Between the Lines" on JMU's 80 One Records. He'll be playing Saturday at the block party.

Along with merchants and their merchandise, partygoers will be treated to a host of games and contests, and student groups – such as sororities and fraternities – will have the chance to compete against each other.

As no block party is complete without a good set of tunes, HDR has booked three local bands to entertain the crowd.

Ross Copperman, Nathaniel Baker and Sharpire are all tapped for Saturday's show, according to Marsh. All have ties to James Madison University.

The shindig will wrap up with a showing of the "Dazed and Confused" at the Court Square Theater.

The screening will be the only event of the day with an admission fee – \$2. The rest of the events, from dunking

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Bands, breakdancing and eating contests on tap for Saturday

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booths to eating contests to breakdancing, will be free to all comers.

Because some might see a block party as something to exacerbate "town-gown" tensions rather than ease them, Marsh also addressed the potential concerns of townspeople who might not want downtown Harrisonburg turned into a beer-soaked free-for-all.

"It's a party," she explained, "but not an out-of-control party."

Alcohol will not be provided or allowed in the block party area, she added, although restaurants that serve alcoholic beverages will be conducting business as usual.

Logistics will not be a problem, said Marsh, noting that the traffic control plan will be the same as that used for the weekly "Friday on the Square" events.

Marsh, who said the Block Party

in the 'Burg has been in the works since spring, has high hopes for the party's success and subsequent expansion next year.

With four colleges in the area and a burgeoning general population, Marsh has a lot to work with — and high hopes.

"We want to strengthen the relationship between the students and the town," she said.

Bridgitte Baylor, public relations coordinator for Blue Ridge Community College, said she was thrilled the group was organizing the party.

"Our students, being local, probably have a good idea of what's downtown, but it's a good chance for them to socialize with student from other schools," she said.

For more information about the Block Party in the Burg, go to www.downtownharrisonburg.org.



Shapiro, an indie rock band, features Jeremy Teter on vocals and piano, John Granofsky on drums, background vocals and sampling, Carl Shapiro on bass and Nathan Granofsky on background vocals. The band is inspired by groups including Ben Folds, the Beatles, Phish, Radiohead, Tool and the Flaming Lips.