

FILMS AL FRESCO

Family fun on the big screen at Fort Hunter. | BY PHYLLIS ZIMMERMAN

After months of lingering cold weather, June is here at last with hopes of warm, mild days and glorious, long sunsets that herald summertime.

June also means that it's time, once again, to round up the lawn chairs, blankets, family and friends for free, outdoor movie fun at Fort Hunter Park.

Starting June 1, Dauphin County Parks and Recreation's "Sunset Movie Series" returns with the family-friendly adventure film, "Indiana Jones & the Last Crusade." Movies are shown on a 9-by-16-foot screen next to the Centennial Barn but move inside the barn in the event of rain.

"June is a good month for the film series," explained Michelle Hornberger, assistant program director for Dauphin County Parks and Recreation. "We tried doing it in July, but it didn't work. June works because kids and their families still are in a routine from school."

Moreover, trial-and-error has proven Friday to be the choice evening of the weekend.

"Friday night is a good night to show films

because it's before people get into their weekends," Hornberger said. "We tried doing it on Saturday and Sunday, but those didn't quite work, either."

On a "good night," attendance can surge to 400, depending on the weather, Hornberger said. While waiting for the movie to begin at 8:30 p.m., filmgoers often toss footballs, chat with neighbors or simply savor a descending sunset over the Susquehanna River.

Early-birds also dig into picnic baskets or purchase movie snacks as such popcorn, candy or ice cream from the Friends of Fort Hunter. Dauphin County Human Services also is on hand to offer children's activities, crafts and resource pamphlets.

"It's great to see families have fun together," said Dauphin County Commissioner Jeff Haste, who comes to the films each year with his children and grandchildren. "You see people in lawn chairs and blankets there. It's a fun night."

The series began 12 years ago after Haste, who oversees the county's Parks and Recreation, challenged the department to offer more family-

friendly activities, he said. In response, staff and the Friends of Fort Hunter developed what would become the Sunset Movie Series.

"The Dauphin County Commissioners really wanted us to ramp up our programs," said Hornberger.

For the series' first year, the county offered just two movies, but the films attracted so much response that more shows were added.

"Our movies tend to be nostalgic," Hornberger noted. "It's not all the latest and the greatest. It's often films that people in their 30s and 40s might remember as kids and want to share with their own families, like 'The Mighty Ducks' or 'Indiana Jones.' We also show one funny movie each year for a date night, like 'Airplane.'" **B**

Dauphin County's Sunset Movie Series is sponsored by TheBurg, Sheetz and WGAL-TV Channel 8.

Fort Hunter Mansion and Park is located at 5300 N. Front St., Harrisburg.

BLANKETS DOWN!

Get the kids and coolers ready for Dauphin County's "Sunset Movie Series" at Fort Hunter Park. All shows begin at 8:30 p.m.

June 1: "Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade"

June 8: "Angels in the Outfield"

June 15: "Jaws"

June 16: "The Mighty Ducks"
(at Shope Park in Middletown)

June 22: "Little Giants"

June 29: "Airplane!"





NO SMALL PLANS

Club XL supersizes Harrisburg nightlife.

BY LAWRENCE BINDA

The people mingled and gathered, the lights flashed on, the band took the stage.

It was go time at Club XL.

Harrisburg's newest entertainment venue opened last month to a crowded house, which is saying something given the sheer size of the place.

Let's just say that, at Club XL, nothing is small.

Big space, big patio, big stage, big bars, huge screens.

That's the grand vision of owner Phil Dobson, who opened the 18,500-square-foot club and music venue in an old, 1940s-era warehouse near S. Cameron and Hanna streets in Harrisburg.

"Everything is big, hence the XL," Dobson said.

The club is the latest piece of Dobson's redevelopment puzzle for this once-industrial and later forsaken area. Across one street, he opened Savannah's on Hanna in 2009 and, across another street, River City Blues Club and Dart Room in 2014.

Dobson has owned the Club XL building for about eight years, buying it without a solid plan, but with the thought that he wanted to control the small, several-block area just off I-83, gradually transforming it into a nightlife destination.

Now those plans are firm, and they are of the extra-large variety.

Walking in, a reception area leads to an enormous dance floor with one of the largest stages in Harrisburg, the ceiling outfitted with an industrial lighting system.

"I went all out with the lighting and the sound to give a true nightclub experience," he said, adding that he's gone as far as to install CO₂ cannons. "When you're here, it's all sensory appeal. This brings it to a higher level."

A 24-tap bar winds around the entire back and leads to a long room on the side, which features a concession area for food orders, with tables. Six giant screens grace the walls, capped off by a 200-inch behemoth. Upstairs, there's a VIP area, with bottle service available, and, outside, a large bar and patio built around a 200-year-old sycamore tree.

Dobson said that he was inspired by Las Vegas clubs and wanted to bring that type of big-city nightlife to Harrisburg. To that end, he features big dance parties on Friday nights, but it won't all be DJs.

Dobson also is booking live music for touring bands that need a mid-sized venue that can hold about 1,200 people. The alt-rock lineup of Puddle of Mudd, Saving Abel and Tantric came to town for the debut concert last month. Local bands also will be featured, and Smooth Like Clyde and Honeypump played for Club XL's soft opening the night before.

This month, the venue will feature performances by Tyler Bryant & the Shakedown, among other bands. It also will host several tribute bands, including In Gratitude (Earth, Wind & Fire), Back in Black (AC/DC) and Bark at the Moon (Ozzy Osbourne).

Club XL also will host sports, comedy and other events that can use a large open space, a stage, lights, giant screens and other amenities, Dobson said.

"When people come here, I want them to be wowed," he said. "I want to give them so many options that it'll be an experience." **B**

Club XL is located at 801 S. 10th St., Harrisburg. For more information, call 717-409-8975, email ClubXL@comcast.net or visit www.xlbbg.com.

ARTIST IN FOCUS

P.D. MURRAY

Some amazing artists call the Harrisburg area home, and we feature their work in TheBurg each month. However, we feel that we still don't do justice to the incredible painters, illustrators, photographers and sculptors who reside in central PA.

Therefore, from time to time, we plan to feature the work of a single artist in our pages. In so doing, we hope to give greater recognition to these talented individuals and better highlight the artwork created right here in our area.

So, please enjoy this first selection from P.D. Murray, who is also our cover artist this month. Murray has been painting for more than 30 years and has become known for his distinctive modern expressionist style. You can see more of his work by visiting the Millworks in Harrisburg or by going to www.pdmurray.art.

