

Columnist: Super Show stands up to Xmas Jam

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| Guest commentary

On Wednesday at Madison Square Garden some of the most legendary rock 'n' roll icons joined forces to perform a concert for the ages.

The event was hosted by various philanthropic and corporate entities in New York City to raise money for victims of Hurricane Sandy. Just as Hurricane Sandy was dubbed the "Super Storm," so too, this concert was dubbed the "Super Show."

Because this is the work that I have engaged in after four years as communications Director at MANNA FoodBank, I knew I had to be a part of this event. Perhaps only Live Aid has a more notable and historically legendary lineup.

Eddie Vedder to join forces with Pink Floyd's Roger Waters while the Who and the Rolling Stones warm up with Paul McCartney. Eric Clapton will trade licks with Bon Jovi's Richie Sambora while Kanye West and Alicia Keys ready their grand entrance to the stage. "The Piano Man" Billy Joel waits in the wings while Dave Grohl works up a beat and ColdPlay's Chris Martin croons to the crowd.

And then there's the Boss...Mr. Stone Pony New Jersey Thunderroad himself, kicking the whole night off.

And there I am, guest columnist for the Asheville Citizen Times, trying to make his way among the mega stars to tell the story of maybe the greatest singular rock 'n' roll philanthropy shows of all time.

Platitudes are a must for a guy like me who lives for the music and has found a fortunate way to make a living marrying my passions of music and philanthropy. I couldn't miss an opportunity to observe this penultimate musical moment and report back to Asheville as the city readies itself for the 24th Annual Xmas Jam. Heretofore, I had thought Mr. Warren Haynes to be the reigning king of rock 'n' roll philanthropy, having raised more than \$1 million for Habitat for Humanity. (And honestly, I still do. Superstorm or no Superstorm, the Xmas Jam rolls on for another year.)

What we tend to forget in the glitz and glamour of the big stage and stars is the absolute devastation wreaked upon the northern mid-Atlantic by Hurricane Sandy. America was having enough difficulty with high unemployment, unacceptable levels of food insecurity and childhood poverty. The storm increased homelessness tenfold, businesses shut down, and local nonprofits

couldn't help out the affected population because they were equally at a loss of resources. A storm of that magnitude unleashed onto an already vulnerable population exponentially increases the need for all of us to try to right the ship again. And all of us, in this sense, meant some of the biggest stars in music from today and yesteryear.

But not to be lost in the "greatness" is the people who lost their homes like Danielle De Rosa, who just this week was able to get back into her house in Breezy Point, Staten Island. Being that I'm the small fish in this massive pond, I chose to focus on the people and the concert attendees. Danielle was grateful and even tearful during Bon Jovi's "Living on a Prayer," because that's what her entire neighborhood had been doing since the storm hit.

Perhaps the overarching theme from the performers, organizers and attendees was that the storm was so great that it brought about the need for more greatness. That the force of nature will never be defeated by the whims of man, but we can and should tend to one another when the whims of the earth sling hardship and destruction in our path.

And as I go about my work trying to bring some of these musicians together with corporate America to help fund Feeding America food banks here and nationwide, I will remember the lesson of a humble musician named Warren Haynes who soldiers on year-after-year, superstorm or no superstorm. He leads through action, by inviting his friends in music and playing with each and every one of them during the seven-hour marathon that is the Xmas Jam, a signature Asheville event.

New York aint got nuthin' on us.

Joshua Stack is Founder and Executive Director FATE, Funding American Through Entertainment FUNDING AMERICA THROUGH ENTERTAINMENT and worked as MANNA FoodBank's Communications Director for four years.