

BACKGROUND

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Greenville College AgapeFest

Greenville, IL – As the nation’s only student-run Christian music festival, Greenville College’s AgapeFest ministers to area youth, serves as a learning tool for GC students, and markets the college’s nationally recognized music programs and opportunities. With over 5,000 attendees every year, AgapeFest has become a staple and tradition in the region.

The festival has hosted some of Christian music’s biggest acts since its inception in 1977, including Michael W. Smith, Relient K, and Jars of Clay. With a little bit of everything, acts represent various genres across the musical spectrum, from hip-hop and pop to rock and contemporary. Every year the staff of nearly 70 students along with countless volunteers makes this festival the continued success that it is.

In 1977, GC student Chris Marsh took full initiative of an idea to execute the first AgapeFest (then Agape Music Festival). Inspired by his youth pastor, who served as one of the founding coordinators for Asbury College’s Ichthus music festival, Marsh found himself drawn to bringing a similar idea to the fields of Greenville, IL. He enlisted the help of fellow students through various clubs and campus organizations that wanted to offer what they could for this massive endeavor. Committees were formed for every aspect of the festival, from ticketing to coordinating the main stage. Greenville College has always been a haven of musical talent, so it’s no surprise that the greater number of acts to perform at the first festival were local talent right from GC’s own backyard. The Archers, a well-known act for that time, and speaker Bob Laurent rounded out the line-up. With roughly 1,000 people in attendance the first year, the festival broke exactly even financially, which could be seen as the reason AgapeFest existed for years to follow.

With many changes that took place including the length of the festival from one to two days, the number of stages from one to two, and most obviously the bands from year to year, one thing remains the same about AgapeFest; it began and continues to serve as a ministry to the area youth. With a little bit of everything for everyone, AgapeFest aims to provide relevant and uplifting music to this generation. AgapeFest also hosts a powerful speaker every year to encourage and enlighten.

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AgapeFest exists as a learning tool for Greenville College students, but primarily serves as a ministry to area youth. Year after year, youth along with their parents and leaders flood the Bond County Fairgrounds for two days of music, worship, and fun. Fans can enjoy their favorite artists from the crowd, then connect with them at the AgapeFest autograph tent and browse the merchandise pavilion for the certain souvenir that represents all the memories made that weekend. AgapeFest rocks for the music, but lives to serve the youth.

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