

CHRISTMAS CHARITY BENEFIT

For 20 years, the High Rock Lake River Rats Inc. have given financial assistance to families in need. The group holds an annual charity event on the first Sunday of December. What began as “passing the hat” at the Christmas party in 1987 to collect \$650.00 to help a needy family has blossomed into a daylong fund raiser involving a silent auction, live auction, raffles, live entertainment, dancing, door prizes and a veritable smorgasbord for the consumption of the attendees. The affair attracts roughly 300 people each year and has been held at the Boat Dock Beach Club on High Rock Lake since 1989.

An endless supply of food is prepared and donated by River Rats members, guests and local restaurants and served throughout the afternoon and evening. Area disc jockeys donate their services to provide dance music throughout the event. Celebrity guests have included Fox 8’s Roy Ackland and John Hendrick, of Hendrick Motorsports. Live entertainment has included performances by members of the Part Time Party Time Band, National Junior Shag Dance Champions, William Greene and his partner, and talented local vocalists. Members solicit donations throughout the Piedmont area. Auction items include merchandise and services ranging from a \$20.00 auto service to a \$3000 china cabinet. Popular items include bedding, clothing, jewelry and home furnishings and accessories from North Carolina’s finest manufacturers.

Former River Rat president and High Rock Lake resident, Rusty Sloop, served as event chairman for 14 years. Currently the executive board administrates the fundraiser each year. For the past 10 years, event proceeds have averaged more than \$20,000 every year. A committee within the River Rats screens all applicants and requests and then allocates funds raised. The late Ron Johnson, retired Davidson County educator, chaired the screening committee for over 18 years.

All work is performed by River Rat members and friends and most supplies are donated. Therefore, administrative costs of the fundraiser have never exceeded 2½ % of the proceeds.

Money is usually distributed to 10-25 families and 150-275 additional children each year. Funds are also allocated among 17 area schools and school assistance programs for students and sometimes gifts to other local charities. Assistance has been provided through the payment of medical, electrical and heating bills, purchase of Christmas gifts, groceries, clothing and school supplies. Cash is not given to any applicants.