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Remix: Music club to promote positive, sober fun

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CLAREMONT – Imagine a place where the coffee’s free and served on tap, the atmosphere rocks with contemporary Christian music, and the friendship is real.

James Neilsen of Claremont and the board of directors of Life Fellowship Church in Charlestown envision such a place opening in the Union Block building on Pleasant Street.

They’re calling it Remix – a smoke-drug-and-alcohol-free music club that’s open to anyone 18 years of age and above seeking a positive and safe night out on the town.

“I absolutely think there is a market (for Remix). Who doesn’t want free coffee?” Neilsen quipped.

On Wednesday, the 35-year-old son of former mayor and city council member James Neilsen IV stood before the council to pitch Remix as a fun and sociable way to help the city address the opioid crisis.

While the council is not required to vote on the proposal, Neilsen said he wanted to make the council aware of it.

“We want to do our own part from a faith perspective,” Neilsen told the council.

Council members embraced the idea of a sober interdenominational music club with words of encouragement and support.

“I’m just really excited. I think it’s wonderful what you are doing,” Carolyn Towle said.

Nicholas Koloski, owner of Time Out Americana Grill in Claremont, offered to supply the club with coffee and equipment and welcomed the project, “given the (social) environment we’re in.”

“This is going to be kind of an alternative. I am by no stretch against alcohol. I love wine,” Neilsen said.

Neilsen, a former “secular” disc jockey for bars and clubs, said the Life Fellowship team hopes to lease a 2,500-square-foot former retail space at the Union Block site at 1 Pleasant St. in the former Everything Bridal shop in order to house Remix.

The industrial interior is “real and raw,” with enough room for 50 to 75 people and space for two 65-inch 4K Resolution flat screen TVs for playing music videos.

The club will host a coffee bar where the brew is served fresh, on tap and free of charge. Neilsen also plans to put his skills as a former DJ to use creating a lively mix of “positive Christian music with a good beat to it.”

Later in the evening, the club will offer panel discussions and testimonials from people whose lives were touched by drugs, alcohol, and crime, and then changed for the better.

To ensure a safe and secure experience, “bouncers” will be checking IDs and ensuring club rules are followed, Neilsen said.

“Think of a club. It’s the approximation of a bar, but it’s got coffee, not alcohol,” he said.

Proposed hours of operation are 7 to 10 p.m. on the first and third Friday of the month. If the venture is successful, the club will be open every Friday during the same hours.

Neilsen said the church group is looking for a grand opening later in the year or early 2017. The proposal is currently under city review for required permits. The club will be supported by financial contributions and volunteers, he said.

Claremont Police Chief Alex Scott said the department supports alcohol-free initiatives like Remix.

“It certainly sounds like a worthy effort to provide an alternative location for social gatherings that are not tied to or associated with the consumption of alcohol,” Scott said.

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