

# Ailing drummer benefits from good friends

Just a year ago, drummer Mark Craney was back in Sioux Falls ready to help the Torpedoes stage a comeback attempt.

Just a year ago, the local-boy-done-good didn't want any newspaper mention of the diabetes that has dogged him since he was 12. The disease was the reason he got his first drums, though; his parents thought music would entertain a sick child.

For 25 years, the drums came first and the disease was coped with as Craney made it to the top in music, playing with Jethro Tull, Jean Luc Ponty and Gino Vanelli.

Now, the disease is winning. Craney's kidneys have failed, a



**Ann Grauvogl**

problem that often accompanies diabetes. Craney checked into a California hospital in July; he got out last week only to go back to the emergency room this week. He could be ready for a kidney transplant in two months.

While he waits, he's learning what friends are for.

A group of drummers in Los Angeles staged a concert in July and raised \$19,500 for the transplant. A Sioux Falls contingent is hosting a five-hour, eight-band benefit that begins at 6 p.m. Sunday in the Ramkota Inn Exhibit Hall.

Since the L.A. money is earmarked only for the transplant, local organizer Mike Hurley says he hopes to raise some cash to help Craney with other medical and living expenses.

More than anything else, the benefit concerts are a tribute to Craney's nice-guy appeal.

In L.A., drummers from some of the nation's top bands volunteered to help. Gene Bissonette, one of

Craney's roommates who plays with David Lee Roth, organized the event. Myron Grombacker, who plays with Pat Benetar, and Steve Smith, who played with Journey, were among the nine drummers who volunteered.

The Sioux Falls benefit will offer country, rock and rhythm and blues with local bands including the Torpedoes, American Made and Easy Street. The Jailbreakers, one of the top bands in Omaha, will headline the night. The connection: the lead singer and Craney are friends.

The thing about Craney is that he never forgot Sioux Falls.

**Drummer/See 2B**



**Mark Craney**  
Needs a kidney transplant

A year ago, when he was back for a couple of months at Christmas, Craney agreed to join a Torpedoes comeback attempt. He, Ted Christy, Dan Jensen and Tom Boe formed the group in 1980 to play mostly rhythm and blues. Last year, Craney said the Torpedoes appealed to those on the fence between the country club and Stockman's Bar.

"Maybe we're the missing link for those on the edge of yuppie-dom," Craney said last December, a few days after fans packed the Showcase Lounge.

Sitting in the dimly lit bar at Minerva's, he drank only Seven-Up. Slim, soft-spoken, unfailingly polite, he had an urbane polish that can come from mixing at the top. He didn't take credit for the Torpedoes' success, although judging from talk around town, he probably could have.

"We're playing stuff we like to play for old friends mostly, new friends who are curious and not getting paid for it," he said. "It's art."

Hurley is another one of those Sioux Falls connections. The men met here when Hurley began playing drums six years ago. Craney encouraged Hurley to continue. "He told me it was kind of a natural thing," Hurley remembers. "I never started playing drums until I was 25 years old, which is kind of a late start. He said, 'You should keep on doing that.'"

Hurley describes Craney as "one of the nice people you meet. He just never has a bad word to say about anybody. He's just a supportive kind of guy."

"He's just had a real tough summer. ... I know if I had a problem, he'd be helping me."

Hurley says he didn't have much trouble selling the benefit idea. About everyone he asked has been willing to help, including music stores, record stores, the motel and a fitness center. □

# Area bands drum up support for ill musician

By **STEVE ERPEBACH**  
Argus Leader Staff

Six years ago, Mike Hurley was a new drummer breaking in with his first band.

He'd been playing only a month and a half when he met Mark Craney one November night in an Aberdeen bar. Hurley had gotten a late start playing, beginning at age 25.

"Here was this guy that played with Gino Vanelli, Jethro Tull," Hurley said of Craney. "He just said, 'Keep on going, keep on doing it.'"

Hurley still remembers those words from Craney, a Sioux Falls native.

Craney, the drummer for those name acts, was the performer local musicians would emulate.

Sunday, eight area bands per-



**Mike Hurley**



**Mark Craney**

formed for six hours to help Craney, whose kidneys have failed from diabetes.

Others wanted to help, Hurley said. Some bands offered but were turned down, he said.

Craney is scheduled to undergo a kidney transplant sometime early next year.

Hurley, now a member of the band Easy Street, organized Sunday's event at the Ramkota Inn's Exhibit Hall. Proceeds will go into a trust fund to defray Craney's medical and living expenses.

A group of Los Angeles drummers raised \$19,500 during a benefit in July. That money will be used for the transplant.

Local musicians wanted to do their part, Hurley said. "He's inspired a lot of the musicians that are here tonight with his music," he said. "They're just returning the favor by playing."

The benefit was videotaped and will be sent to Craney.

Until last week, Hurley said he had hopes Craney would be here. But he's too weak, having to go through physical therapy and dialysis three times a week. His

mother, Daisy, has stayed with him in California since July.

Sitting in the second row of tables at the benefit was his family. His father, John, sat and listened to the band members who were also his son's friends.

When one band played a Gino Vanelli song, John Craney cried.

The father carried a recent newspaper clipping about Mark in the pocket of his suitcoat; he took a few photos of the bands.

"He calls us all his kids," Hurley said of Craney's father.

"They are my kids — all of them," said John Craney, who was touched but not surprised by the benefit.

"Tightest grapevine in the world," he said of musicians. "I feel very grateful for everything they're doing."