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By ROBERT PIERCE

- Daily Leader

This Friday night, one lucky person could walk away with a grand in cash and get the chance to open Saturday night – for an American Idol.

The James Maskus Auditorium will be the scene as 25 vocalists from the area take the stage during the second Liberal High School Booster Club Country Showdown.

Doors will open at 6:30 p.m. Friday, and the showdown starts at 7 p.m. Co-organizer Rhett Wettstein said tickets are \$5 at the door, and voting is based on audience and judges.

For the 2010 showdown, cash and prizes have been increased.

“We are offering \$1,000 to the winner, \$250 for second place and \$150 for third,” Wettstein said. “Also the top three will have the opportunity to open up for Bucky Covington the following night.”

Wettstein said the 2009 contest went well with champion Stephanie Bunger, now Musick, and huge support from both audience attendance and contestants. This, he said, encouraged him and fellow organizer Joe Denoyer to continue the showdown.

"We looked at some things that could make the showdown bigger," he said. "We tossed around the idea of maybe having a concert the following night. We were able to make that work."

Indeed they were as they were able to schedule American Idol Bucky Covington for Saturday night in the LHS auditorium. Wettstein said there were a total of 37 entries for this year's showdown, and that list was narrowed to 25 for Friday.

"I'd like to thank the ones who didn't make it for entering, and I encouraged them to enter again next year," he said. "It was tough. We had an independent panel of judges who decided on the top 25. It was not easy. They had to let a lot of good singers go, but it is a competition with 25 vocalists. We had to narrow it down."

Musick will be back for this year's showdown, according to Wettstein.

"She will be performing between the first and second rounds, while we are tallying votes," he said. "We will have various door prizes throughout the evening. Joe Denoyer of 102.7 The Legend will be the host again this year."

Wettstein reminded everyone the showdown is a fundraiser for the LHS Booster Club.

"With the showdown, all ticket proceeds go to support the booster club," he said. "It is very important to come out and support the booster club."

Tickets for Saturday's concert are \$20 and are available at the Crazy House and at Friday's concert.

"After the showdown's over, you can pick up your Bucky tickets there," Wettstein said. "Doors will open at 7 o'clock. Show time is at 8. The top three showdown winners will open up for Bucky. For more information on the showdown and the Bucky concert, go to lhscountryshowdown.com."

Wettstein said there have been many involved with making the showdown a success.

"I would personally like to thank Liberal High School Booster Club, 102.7 The Legend, the Daily Leader and all of our sponsors who have helped us out with the showdown," he said.

As for future showdowns, Wettstein said he and Denoyer are looking to continue the event, possibly with a concert such as this year's, but they will look at that opportunity at a later time.

"As of right now, the way Joe and I are looking at the Bucky concert is we're going to take one step at a time," Wettstein said. "Last year, we had success with the showdown. We decided to continue it. This year, we've made it into Showdown Weekend with the showdown Friday and Bucky Saturday. We'll see how that goes to see if we'll continue that as well. We would like to continue it for next year."

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