

Musicians hope to take 'vehicle' international



By Brock Weir

The phrase 'have gun, will travel' is a well-used one, but it's a philosophy not unlike that shared by musicians Justin Hines, and Ash & Bloom. They don't need much - just some room and board, a place to play, and a good cause.

The trio of Hines, James Bloemendal and Matt McKenna, appeared at the Aurora Cultural Centre earlier this month to support Eating Disorders of York Region's (EDOYR) Riverwalk Wellness Centre.

EDOYR director Janice Morgante has long been a fan of Hines, and when she went to a recent show announcing his Vehicle of Change tour, she knew this would be a perfect fit for her organization. The Vehicle of Change Tour is the brainchild of Hines and his management team, the Agency of Extraordinary People, to quite literally be a vehicle of change to non-profits and worthy causes the length and breadth of North America.

Groups sought them out, and vice-versa, and the result was over a year on the road building a perfect harmony - all for the cost of room and board, with full proceeds going to the group that brought them there.

'We had this idea of doing something a little different and not the standard musical tour,' said Hines. 'We wanted to do something meaningful and outside the box. We wanted to be inclusive and part of the change for everybody. We have had a lot of things to figure out along the way, but we have connected with so many different people from all different walks of life and it has been amazing.'

Adds Bloemendal: 'The whole idea behind Extraordinary People is everyone has the opportunity to be extraordinary and one of those ways is changing the lives of those around them'

Hines connected with Ash & Bloom by chance as well, having a brainstorm seeing them on stage in Port Perry. Sensing they could make beautiful music together, they are, 'miraculously', still friends after spending more than 12 months in close quarters in a vehicle, and a rotating cast of friends and pets.

The Aurora stop was the last in their Vehicle of Change tour and, in the meantime, they are taking time to regroup, evaluate their success, and chart an even grander goal for the years ahead - taking their 'vehicle' international. In the meantime, Ash & Bloom are working on their album which drops this fall and the duo will be returning to the Cultural Centre for a concert on December 8.

'I'm excited to watch their evolution and progression,' said Hines. 'This has been awesome for me. In some ways they're like my baby. Wait, that sounds really weird.'

?Thanks, Dad!? said McKenna with a laugh.

?Yeah, that was much weirder than I thought it would be.?