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Silent rave hopes to make noise for Chinese orphans

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There'll be black lights and strobe lights and teenagers jamming to any and every type of beat. There'll be a "black market" in the corner selling baked goods, and free sodas and water to stave off fatigue.

The scene Saturday night will be uniform as the Fairfield Warde China Care club throws its first-ever "Silent Rave"—at First Presbyterian Church hall, 2475 Easton Turnpike, collecting \$8 per person to benefit Chinese orphans in need of surgery.

The internal vibe will be quite varied, however, with a multitude of tunes shaking bones across the dance floor. The club's flyer defines the silent rave as a "wild dancing party where everyone hears their own music through personal headphones."

Strap on your iPods, Fairfield's youth, it's time to be charitable in style.

The rave will be the first major event for the club, which was founded last year by Erin Clark, now a junior at Fairfield Warde. The club is the local outfit of the China Care Foundation, a Westport and Beijing-based organization that seeks to give Chinese orphans a better life by providing extensive medical, social and educational programs, according to its Web site.

Clark said she wanted to found a club heading into sophomore year at Fairfield Warde. Her mother used to work with the foundation and she was inspired that it was started by a 16-year-old.

In the first year, she and the couple dozen members that joined raised over \$6,000, running a constant stream of bake sales and car washes, enough to help finance surgeries for three Chinese orphans.

The first orphan, Dang Tian Cheng, 5, was an abandoned orphan with a deformed foot. The club's funds helped finance two foot surgeries for Tian between November 2008 and December 2009.

"He was always using a crutch and wasn't able to run around and play with other kids beforehand," Clark said. "The surgery for him wasn't life-saving, but it was life-changing. Now he can run around."

The second, however, was life-saving. The ma-



Tim Loh / Staff reporter

support the china care club!

SILENT! RAVE

silent rave (n.): a wild dancing party where everyone hears their own music through personal headphones

SATURDAY, JANUARY 16TH
7-10 PM

\$8 admission fee
*iPods required

Brooks Hall
First Presbyterian Church
2475 Easton Turnpike
Fairfield, CT

snacks provided
baked goods for sale

Pictured with the rest of the Fairfield Warde China Care Club is co-president and founder Erin Clark, kneeling third from left in the front row. Also pictured is Cassidy, Erin's twin sister and co-president, kneeling third from right in the front row. Their efforts have helped make the silent rave a reality. At left is the club's promotional poster.

that silent raves were the new thing in certain scenes in New York. The thought grew legs.

"It just sounds really cool, and people are excited," Clark said. "People have heard about it and are planning on going."

How many? Already, 30 people have signed the club's Facebook invitation saying they will definitely attend, Clark said. An additional 100 or so responders checked off that they might attend. "They're teenagers," she mused. "You never know if they're really interested till they show up." The event is open to all ages, will be chaperoned and has bouncers.

Clark said she hopes to visit China herself some day. Not yet though. "I'm saving up money to go to Africa for a gap year after high school as a teacher," she said. "I wouldn't be able to also pay for a plane ticket to China. Although I'd love to."

Then she added about the dance: "We're going to make it as 'ravey' as possible. Without the drugs, of course."

jority of last year's funds went to Shao, now a 2-and-a-half-year-old boy living in the foundation's home in Beijing, who had been abandoned by his parents and suffered from congenital heart defects. The club helped pay for his surgeries and treatment afterwards. "Hopefully, when he is ready," the foundation's donor follow-up report reads, "he will be able to move into a loving foster family of his own."

The club used its first-year's leftover funds over the summer to help fund another heart surgery, for Ying, a 1-year-old girl.

While they brought in a lot of money last year, Clark said, there was one problem.

"People were walking away from our stands without knowing who we

were," she said. "We were worried that, by the time all of us graduate, there would be nobody left."

So this year, the club set a new agenda. It would raise funds, but also awareness. To do so, it chose to focus on big events. The idea of holding a dance formed about a year ago. But because the club is not an entire grade, they were not allowed to host it at school.

Then there was another problem. "Dances are starting to be overrated and outdated. We had the idea to do a dance, but if people wouldn't go to school dances then why would they go to ours?" Clark said.

Then Jamie Mercado, also a junior, mentioned that her father, who used to work for Rolling Stone Magazine, had told her