

Legacy of young musician lives on at two Catholic churches

BY CHERIE SPINO
Chronicle Writer

SANDUSKY—Scott Gast was a giver. From the time he was 13 years old, the gifted musician from Castalia and his Christian band, Shoebox, played at area churches, including Huron St. Peter and his parents' church, Sandusky Holy Angels.

His rock band, CoCoBeanOs, became a beloved fixture on the music scene in the Sandusky area. And as popular as the group was, Scott, the lead singer, was never too busy to pose for photos with his smallest fans or chat with folks between sets.

"He had a special God-given gift to make you feel special," says his dad, George Gast.

As Mr. Gast talks about his son, tears stream down his face. It's coming up on the one-year anniversary of Scott's death in a car accident. He was just 30 years old when he died.

Scott, an assistant bank manager in Cleveland by day and a musician by night, was a good man, Mr. Gast says — a good student, a loving son, a hard worker and a talented musician.

When he died, thousands of cards and letters poured in from those he had touched.

The pain is still fresh for Mr. Gast, and he is trying to make sense of the tragedy. He has devoted himself to honoring Scott and continuing his musical legacy. It helps him heal, he says.

On "Shoebox Sundays" at Holy Angels, as Scott played, he looked up at a stained glass window near the altar — Jesus on his knees in the garden at Gethsemane.

The image spoke to him, he told his father. He identified with Jesus' suffering. He wrote a song, "Carry On," about finding the strength to

Scott Gast, who was 30 years old when he died, was a beloved musician in the Sandusky area. He started a Christian music band — Shoebox — as a teen and played in a popular band called CoCoBeanOs.

endure the storms and coming back to God.

Little did he know that the song would someday help his own father cope and carry on. Mr. Gast keeps a laminated copy of the lyrics in his pocket, along with well-used prayer cards.

To honor Scott, Mr. Gast, his wife, Melanae, and son Bryan (who played in the bands with Scott) asked those who loved him to contribute to a fund to restore the Gethsemane window. They raised \$28,300, more than enough. (Further donations are welcome and will be used to restore other stained glass windows at the church in Scott's memory.)

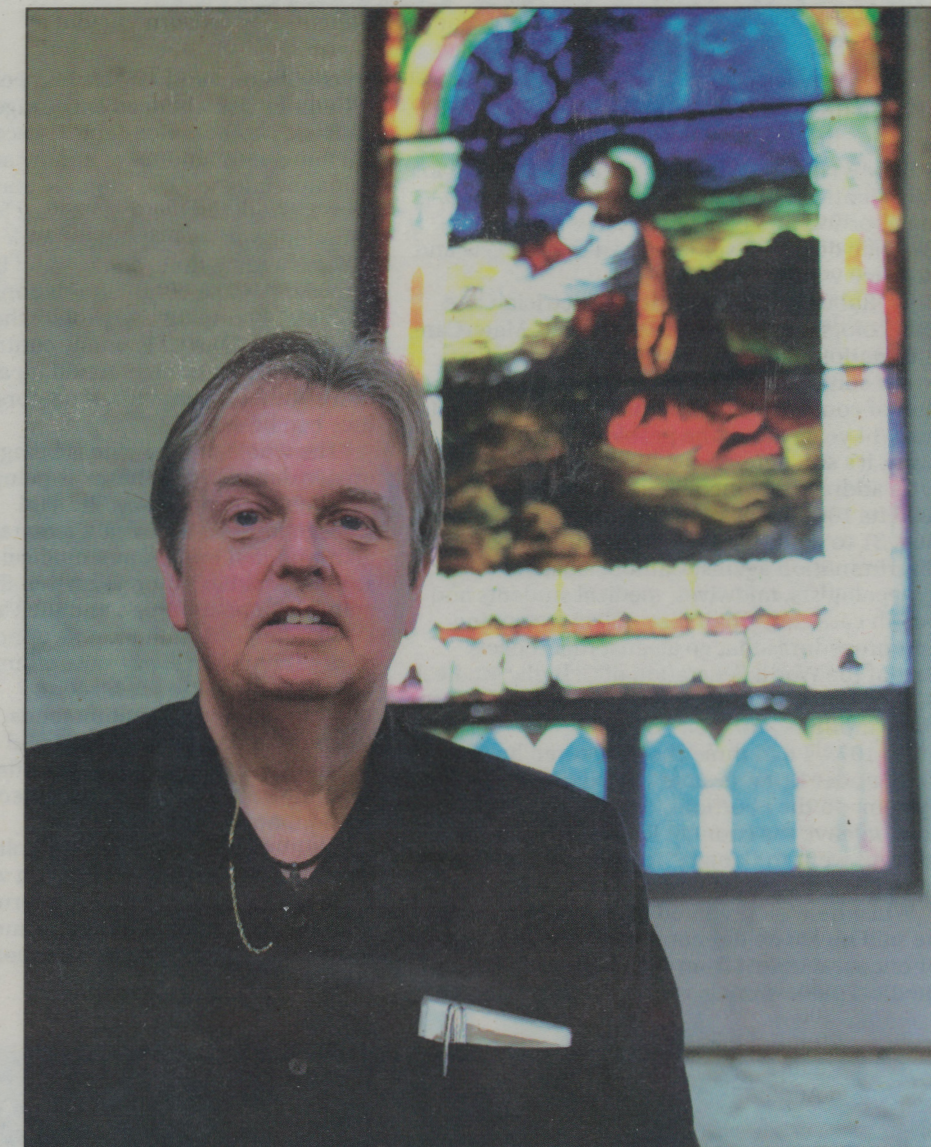
At Scott's funeral, Mr. Gast approached the three organizers of Little Kids Rock, a weekly after-school program that teaches rock music to students at Huron St. Peter.

He wanted to establish the Scott Gast Music Memorial Fund. Contributions would help purchase instruments and provide scholarships to help cover the \$80-a-month fee.

St. Peter is one of the first churches that embraced Scott's Christian band. Former youth minister Jeanne Cunningham says she was looking for musicians who could energize her youth group, and Scott, then in high school, was "God sent." He was always smiling and never late, she says, just an ordinary kid who loved God and rock music.

"He would exude an energy that invigorated the kids," she says. "They saw firsthand what living a life in Christ could be."

Scott's first wedding gig — he was just 16 — was at Bo and Julie Loeffler's wedding. Years later, the couple took their two young daughters to CoCoBeanOs' family-friendly concerts, and Scott would let the girls talk into



Chronicle photos by Cherie Spino

To honor the memory of his son, Scott, who died last year in a car accident, George Gast asked for donations from those who loved Scott to restore Scott's favorite stained glass window at Sandusky Holy Angels — Jesus at Gethsemane.

the microphone onstage.

The Loefflers, along with John Cipiti, a St. Peter parishioner and music professor at Terra State Community College, started Little Kids Rock. When the Scott Gast Memorial was dedicated in August at the Huron Boat Basin, where Scott frequently played, they got some of the kids together to play "Knockin' on Heaven's Door" at the event.

Afterward, the students — dressed in their St. Peter school uniforms — handed out donation envelopes to those who had

come to honor Scott. They raised \$457, and Mr. Gast, who owns a music store, donated three new guitars to the program. Scott is still giving back. His legacy lives on.

Donations to the Scott Gast Music Memorial Fund can be mailed to LKR-Huron, c/o 409 Anchorage Circle, Huron, OH 44839. Send donations to restore more windows at Holy Angels in Scott's honor to Holy Angels, 428 Tiffin Ave., Sandusky, OH 44870.

