

Local celebs sing their hearts out for Make-a-Wish kids

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BLOOMINGTON -- Singer Jim Morris, clad in dark sunglasses and accompanied by two backup dancers, grabbed the mic and belted out a soulful version of the Marshall Tucker Band's "Can't You See."

Not bad for a president of a local packaging company.

Morris was the first-place singer at Saturday night's second annual Celebrity Sing for Wishes, held at Gill Street Sports Bar and Restaurant, 3002 Gill St. The event raises money for the McLean County area Make-a-Wish Foundation, which helps grant wishes for children with life-threatening illnesses.

"It's a fantastic cause. I urge everyone to come out and support it next year," Morris said after his solo.

According to a preliminary count Saturday night, donations plus corporate sponsorships brought the grand total to between \$25,000 and \$30,000, said local Make-a-Wish fundraising chair Dr. Chad Tattini. That money should be enough to possibly fund up to five or six wishes for sick children.

This year's pool of local celebs included 13 notable names, including TV and radio personalities and business and community leaders.

The top three leaders in donations - Morris, State Farm Insurance Cos.' Mark Oakley and Eastview Christian Church's Rev. Mike Baker -- took to the stage for solos with the Gerry and the G-Men band. The remaining 10 came together later for a rendition of "Sweet Home Alabama."

"Any time you have a chance to go out and meet with the families, meet with the kids, and see what a difference this makes in their lives in a very difficult time ... it's just so powerful," said Oakley, a former board member for the local Make-a-Wish chapter.

"I'm a horrible singer, but it was a pretty easy decision to do something positive for the kids here."