

## Bands on the crawl

„ Thirteen groups will play at 12 venues around Old Town in the kickoff of First Friday.

BY STEPHANIE BARNARD

Wichita Eagle correspondent

A new monthly downtown event debuts tonight. Called First Friday, it's a "music crawl" similar to the arts-based Final Friday that occurs on the last Friday of every month.

It's hoped that First Friday will be an ongoing event taking place on the first Friday of every month. It's being launched by ROK ICT!, an organization founded last November to promote Wichita-area musicians.

Jared Brickman, 23, is one of the chief organizers. After moving to Wichita from Syracuse, N.Y., last summer, Brickman says, he went online to research the local music scene. When he couldn't find information that appealed to him, he began to think about creating a local online music and arts calendar.

ROK ICT! is a social network where musicians can promote their work and add upcoming shows to the calendar. It can be found at [www.rokict.com](http://www.rokict.com).

Brickman is assisted by Adam Hartke, 28, who owns a local recording and promotion company called Hartke Records; and Jason Dilts, 26, former executive director of the Sedgwick County Democratic Party.

"We're trying to change public perception on original music," Hartke said.

For tonight's First Friday, a panel of judges narrowed 80 bands that had applied to perform down to 13 groups that will play at 12 venues around Old Town. Each performance will take place at a set time between 6 and 9 p.m. so audiences can travel between shows.

Half of the venues will be open to people of all ages and a few of the others are open to those who are at least 18, Brickman said.

"We want to show people that there are fun things to do downtown if you're not 18 or 21," Dilts said. "That ties into our overall goal of having a more thriving downtown."

Scott Allan Knost, who has been making music in Wichita since 2007, said he doesn't have too much trouble getting venues to hire him. But he hopes First Friday will bring out more of the community.

"Everyone knows there's great music here," he said. "They just don't always support it."

Brickman took charge of negotiating contracts between the venues and bands, requiring that each group be paid the same amount. Part of ROK ICT!'s mission is to help artists make a living, he said.

All of the bands are Kansasbased, with some from Wichita and others from Lawrence, Winfield, Emporia and other locations around the state. Eventually, Brickman wants to expand the talent pool to include national and international acts.

"We want to create national buzz around Wichita," he said.

Ann Keefer, marketing director for the Wichita Downtown Development Corporation, said a trolley will run between venues, as on Final Friday. Events like First Friday are crucial to downtown revitalization, she said.

"I'm excited because it's putting the focus on music," said Keefer, who has helped organize music crawls for the Wichita Blues Society. "Wichita has a wealth of music talent, and a lot of it is taken for granted by our residents."

Brickman acknowledged that First Friday wouldn't be possible if the framework set by Final Friday didn't already exist. But he said First Friday is intended to add to, not detract from, that experience.

"We're not trying to compete with anyone," he said.



Jaime Oppenheimer/The Wichita Eagle

The founders of First Friday — from left, Jason Dilts, Jared Brickman and Adam Hartke — hope it will enliven the downtown entertainment scene as well build support for live local music.

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