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Singer-songwriter Jeff Cochell performs Sunday afternoon at a benefit for Beau and Sally Vencill at Tyee Winery.

## Music from the heart

By Nancy Raskauskas  
Gazette-Times Reporter

*Family, friends raise money for Philomath public works director*

Sitting on an outdoor wooden stage framing a view of farm fields stretching off into the distance, guitarist and singer-songwriter Jeff Cochell played "John Henry" on Sunday to a small crowd on the lawn in front of him.

Others browsed silent-auction items, bought T-shirts or stood in line to buy food or wine.

But despite the different activities, everyone at Tyee Wine Cellars on Sunday afternoon came for the same reason: To help Beau and Sally Vencill.

"This was all organized by friends of my father," said Michael Vencill appreciatively as he looked out over the scene south of Corvallis. "Almost everyone who is playing has played before with Dad."

Michael's father Beau, an excellent musician in his own right, remains in serious condition at Legacy Emanuel

Hospital in Portland after a single car accident on May 19 that left both him and his wife hospitalized with burns and broken bones. Their car crashed off Highway 99W, near Airport Road, shortly before midnight that night, went over a 40-foot embankment, struck a power pole and caught fire with the two inside the car.

Beau has worked for the city of Philomath for 26 years, including 14 as its public works director, and was nearing retirement at the time of the accident. Sally has worked for many years on the county elections board and most-recently worked for the Corvallis School District.

Sally Vencill, made an appearance at the benefit on Sunday, flanked by family.

Still healing from burns suffered in the accident, she wore a floppy straw hat to protect her face from the sun. She was released from the hospital in Portland on July 24, and many people were happy to share a few words, smiles and handshakes with her throughout the afternoon.

Michael recently shared some good news on the family's CaringBridge blog. As of July 29, his father was able to breathe without a ventilator for five hours straight — a huge stride considering that the family had been warned by doctors earlier that he might never breathe without a ventilator again.

"He's making slow, but steady improvements," said Michael, who was at the event on Sunday with his fiancée Erin Bolger. "He still has a long way to go."

Michael and Erin will have a large wedding celebration on Sept. 13. But, they plan to perform the actual ceremony a few days earlier at the hospital in Portland, so Beau can be present.

"I would just like to thank everyone — friends, family and strangers — for the support they've shown my family," Michael said on Sunday.

A longtime friend of the Vencills, musician Terry Davis, of Portland, organized the benefit event on Sunday, or at least initiated the planning.

"It was like throwing a match in tall grasses," Davis said. "I think people needed a way to help out."

The response was impressive.

The musicians who donated their time included Jay Howlett, DonnaLynn and Terry Davis, Cold Snap, Dan Bottom and Katie Boula, Cochell and Roland Woodcock.

Tyee Wine Cellars offered the venue free of charge as well as a percentage of their daily sales, and Safeway donated food and auction items.