



# With the Vibes over, it's time to go home

Monday, August 2, 2010 - John Burgeson, Staff Writer

BRIDGEPORT -- Not long after Damian Marley & Nas played its last chord Sunday night, just about all of the 20,000 people at the Gathering of the Vibes were out of Bridgeport and on their way home.

But not Kyle Kniffin, 19, of Concord, N.H., one of the few stragglers hanging out by the Perry Arch Monday morning, trying to cobble together a way home.

Kniffin's predicament was worse than most. After a colossal mix-up, his girlfriend left Bridgeport with his ride home, and with his cell phone and most of his money. And to make matters worse, he doesn't have a credit card, the always handy fall-back option most of us take for granted.

"I got separated from my girlfriend during the last concert," he said, telling his tale of woe. "Her friend texted her to tell her that I was going to get a ride from her friend. But I told them that I was going home with my girlfriend." So his friends -- the ones that he was supposed to go home with -- left for Concord without him. The couple had a spat earlier that day, he said, which may have sown the seeds of miscommunication.



A large crowd watches the performance of Jimmy Cliff at the Gathering of the Vibes music festival at Seaside Park in Bridgeport on Sunday, August 1, 2010. Photo: Brian A. Pounds / Connecticut Post

After the festival's last act played, and after wandering about for hours in the dark looking for his girlfriend and other friends from Concord, he borrowed a stranger's cell phone and called his girlfriend, Jen. By this time it was 2:40 a.m., he said, and she was just outside of Boston.

He said that he spent Sunday night "sleeping under a tree."

Aside from the hassle of getting home, he said "it was the best Vibes" that he's been to. "The last time I was here was in 2007, and this was a lot better," he said.

Organizers won't have final attendance figures until Tuesday, but earlier they had pronounced their satisfaction with the 15th annual Vibes, if for no other reason than the sparkling weather, a contrast to 2009's soggy event. Last year's event was marred by the death of a man -- of natural causes -- and incidents of gangs peddling nitrous oxide. This year, there were only a few arrests for drug possession.

On Monday, another concert-goer hanging out under the Perry Arch called himself Mark Coyote from "upstate New York," adding that Coyote was not his real name. "I'm just trying to figure out how to get gas money to get to the next show," he said. "I'm not sure what the next show is," he said.

He said that he didn't want to give his name because he's a professional glass-blower and he was afraid that he would be associated with those who fashion glass bongos and the like, although he said that he wasn't in that line of work.

One of the last people to leave was Sara Smulligan, 25, of Hazleton, Pa., who was busy with her husband, Daniel, collecting unwanted tents for a Haiti relief effort, Tents for Haiti.

"We came down here Tuesday night, because we didn't have tickets or anything, and it was really difficult for us to get volunteer passes. It was crazy," she said.

After the concert, the couple gathered "as many unwanted tents as we could fit in our van."

The Tents for Haiti organization, based in Houston, has collected 200,000 tents.

They said that they got involved with the effort after meeting up with "a 16-year-old kid" at the last concert they attended, who was collecting tents for the effort.

"It touched my heart -- I was really impressed that he was doing all of this," she said. "The tents are all in my van -- it's a mess."



Dan and Sara Smulligan, of PA, collect abandoned tents after the Gathering of the Vibes concert weekend in Bridgeport. They are donating the tents to the "Tents for Haiti" organization. Photo: B.K. Angeletti / Connecticut Post



Kanga, of New York, left, and Mark, of Vermont, both declined to give last names, try to get rides home on Monday, August 2, 2010 after the Gathering of the Vibes concert weekend in Bridgeport. Photo: B.K. Angeletti / Connecticut Post



Volunteers for Clean Vibes, of North Carolina, clean up on Monday, August 2, 2010 after the Gathering of the Vibes concert weekend in Bridgeport. Clean Vibes is an event waste and recycling service. Photo: B.K. Angeletti / Connecticut Post