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ROCKCANROLL

'Hippie' is hip to LI hunger

BY STEVE PARKS

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When Aimee Holtzman, founder of rockCANroll, told her family of her epiphany — that she could use her love of rock and roll to feed the hungry — her kids laughed and said, "Oh, Mom, you're such a hippie."

Not that her sons (now at NYU and Jericho High School) doubted that Mom was serious. But sometimes she talks like a starry-eyed groupie rapping about peace, love and understanding. "Chicago told us we can make it happen," Holtzman says, "and Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young said we can change the world and John Lennon taught us to imagine."

Holtzman's epiphany came, she says, "like a V-8 moment" — only she didn't smack herself on the head. A neighbor in Jericho who has a business in Honduras asked for her help after a 1998 hurricane devastated the coast of the Central American country. Sending money would just line the pockets of a corrupt government, he said, so she collected three ship containers of canned food and other nonperishables. That got her to thinking about helping the hungry on Long Island.

"If people gathering to hear rock and roll brought just one



Aimee Holtzman greets concertgoers at Westbury, with Dan Kellachan, left.

can of food each, we could help the 260,000 people on Long Island who turn to pantries and soup kitchens — 40,000 of them seniors and 93,000 children," says Holtzman. Where does she get her figures? From America's Second Harvest, the national food bank network.

Holtzman started teaming

up with organizers of school concerts to collect canned food, winter coats or whatever was needed. One drive brought stuffed bunnies and baskets of chocolates to hundreds of kids who'd otherwise do without on Easter.

But the big break for rockCANroll came from another neighbor: the North Fork Theater at Westbury. In February, marketing director Dan Kellachan agreed to let Holtzman set up her collection kiosk at the front entrance of the music hall before each rock concert. "It sounded like a good karma kind of thing," Kellachan recalls.

Last week, rockCANroll collected 1,000 pounds of food to be distributed to some of the 800 agencies who feed the Island's hungry. Tonight, she'll be at Westbury again, an hour before the 8 p.m. Lynyrd Skynyrd concert. If you don't have canned food on hand, stop by a convenience store on your way and buy juice cartons. "They're a luxury," Holtzman says. "Can you believe that? Juice boxes, a luxury."

But then she adds, "We can make a difference in these kids' lives."

Such a hippie.

Collecting for the cause

Tonight's Lynyrd Skynyrd concert begins at 8 at the North Fork Theater at Westbury. For tickets (\$56.50-\$66.50) go online at livenation.com or call 516-334-0800. For future concerts and other events where rockCANroll will be collecting nonperishable food, check the rockcanroll.org Web site.

If you can't make a live show, you can still contribute to rockCANroll. Volunteer by e-mailing at info@rockcanroll.org, faxing to 302-261-1140, or calling 516-822-3457. Or you can write and/or send a tax-deductible donation by check payable to rockCANroll Inc. to Box 700, Jericho, NY 11753.