

Quinnipiac's Fall Fest brings Kids That Fly, merch and activities

NORAH MAJEWSKI/CHRONICLE

By SOPHIE MURRAY
Arts & Life Editor

Quinnipiac University's Student Programming Board and WQAQ 98.1 FM hosted Fall Fest on Sunday afternoon, bringing students together for an afternoon of live music, merch and fall festivities.

This year's Fall Fest looked a little different than expected. After the original event was postponed due to rain, the rescheduled date brought more of the same weather. Despite setbacks, organizers made the most of the day, delivering a Fall Fest experience that brought the excitement of the outdoor event inside.

Instead of taking place on the Mount Carmel Campus quad, the event took place in the Piazza, where the stage area and student center rooms were used to accommodate the activities. Despite the smaller space, students filled the area as music played and the festivities continued indoors.

Organizers had initially hoped to keep some of the event outdoors, but weather ultimately forced another change of plans.

"By Friday we knew we were going to put all the activities inside, and we were hoping to still have performances on the library steps and that's what we set up," Assistant Director of Student Engagement Nicole Healy said. "But by 10 a.m. it was raining. The bands were super flexible though…so they made it work inside for us."

The last-minute adjustments were just one part of the work that went into bringing Fall Fest to campus. Organizing an event the size of Fall Fest requires lots of preparation beginning in May, to coordinate activities and performances months in advance.

The planning process began with deciding the headlining entertainment.

"We started with artists, so we started booking Kids That Fly because that's what determines our date," Healy said.

Once the performance was established, the team turned their attention to the activities and merchandise that would fill the event. Looking at previous years helped the team identify which attractions students would enjoy the most and what was worth bringing back.

"We looked at what other activities from past years were really popular, which were our vendor items like our caricatures, our custom items…so we started looking at those again and based on budget and then we ordered our merch," Healy said.

This year's Fall Fest also introduced a new opportunity for student musicians.

"In early September we opened our application for student bands to open which was a really great opportunity that we haven't done before," Healy said.

The selected group, Take 800, featured Quinnipiac students and gave campus musicians an opportunity to perform in front of their peers.

"I think it's a really great opportunity (that Quinnipiac students can perform) because I think they have very good voices and it's good that they get a little experience doing this," sophomore biomedical science major Caitlin Diaz said. "I think it must really help."

Beyond the musical performances, Fall Fest featured a variety of activities and refreshments. Students could pick up free SPB merchandise, including sweatpants and picnic blankets, grab apple cider or create their own popcorn combinations with candy and chocolate at the popcorn bar. Other attractions included caricature artists, custom license plates, henna artists and the Spuds food trucks.

For some students, the merch was the highlight of the event.

"We've been talking about getting these sweatpants for a long time," sophomore occupational therapy major Lily O'Connell said. "We actually scouted everything out this morning when we got Starbucks to make sure they were here, so we're very happy they had some left."

Food and drink was another highlight for students looking to enjoy the fall-themed offerings.

"I'm drinking an apple cider with caramel cold foam on top, and it's actually very good and I made your own popcorn with all of the candies and chocolate," Diaz said.

For other students, the music was the main attraction.

"I've always enjoyed coming to Fall Fest because I love live music," graduate public relations student Taryn Klein said. "I like that it's inside because it's a little cozier and you can be a little closer to the artist and interact more and make eye contact and facial expressions. I'm also always interested in finding new artists and new music and I love a little bit of indie underground."

Although some students would have preferred an outdoor event, others appreciated the atmosphere created by the indoor setting.

"We're a little disappointed it's inside but it's still a fun environment. Honestly, with the band being inside it's louder so it feels more like a concert," O'Connell said.

Students also acknowledged the challenges posed by the weather.

"I just think it's unfortunate it happened again where it's raining on a scheduled day and I would prefer it to be outside experiencing the fall and this place isn't that big enough to fit everyone. But I still appreciate that it's happening," sophomore film, television and media major Ella Martinez said.

Students still expressed appreciation for the organizers who worked to keep the event running.

"The staff has worked really hard despite the circumstances and it's very impressive how they've all put it together so everyone can enjoy it," sophomore psychology and criminal justice double major Megan Mast said.

For Healy, the effort reflected the work of the student organizations behind the event and its commitment to bringing students' ideas to life.

"The board as a whole has poured so much energy into this. I want this to be all of the (student's) voices to be heard and have their own vision come to life. That's what really matters to me," Healy said.

Despite the rain, Fall Fest brought students together for an afternoon of music, food and activities. While the weather changed the setting, organizers adapted to keep the festivities going, giving students a chance to enjoy the performances and attractions, while experiencing a different side of the annual campus traditions.

Alzheimer's has taken my Nana's yesterdays

By ANTHONY ANGELILLO
Copy Editor

My Nana has always been my Granny Apple. Back in fourth grade, I wrote a letter to the Apple Harvest Parade Committee about how much I love her, and I won.

I read my letter in front of my family and onlookers, and days later, I would be riding in the parade, my Nana by my side, as she always had been. She is also the woman who announced my birth inside the Marshalls, where she worked.

Maybe it's the 19 years she spent helping me become the person I am today that made me the first person in my family to notice something was off with my Nana.

When I brought it up, I was shot down. My dad thought it was all in her head and blamed the changes on the isolation she went through during the COVID-19 pandemic. To him, she was not sick; she had just been alone for too long.

Plenty of people reach for an explanation other than disease, and one of the most common is age.

A 2024 Alzheimer Disease International survey of more than 40,000 people found that 80% of the general public believes Alzheimer's and dementia is a normal part of aging, up from 66% in 2019.

It was 2022 when signs started appearing, and it wasn't until 2025 that she was officially diagnosed.

People with Alzheimer's and dementia are diagnosed an average of 3.5 years after their first symptoms are noticed, the same as my Nana. So, my Dad was right that the problem was in her head. He was wrong about what cured her.

Because now, in 2026, my Nana is no longer the person I once knew. She believes everyone is watching her, so she stops and stares to see what is going on around her.

She always wants to go to the store to buy things she already has. We go through the things she actually needs so she remembers and isn't fighting with herself or me about a trip she doesn't need to take.

When we do go to the store, she always gets her party-size Chips Ahoy and Pepsi, which she always finishes by the next visit. My Nana loves her cookies, and even though I insist I can get them for her before we go out, she always says no, "I want to go to spend more time with my grandson."

We always get Chick-fil-A every time we see each other. We sometimes eat there in silence because I don't know how to talk to my Nana.

It's painful every second. She hasn't forgotten my name yet, but she has with others. She makes up stories that never happened, and I just have to nod, as my heart breaks more and more.

When I drop her off, I give her the best hug known to man. As I walk out, I head to my car and pull up in front of the nursing home where she now lives without my Papa. I wave at her through the window as I drive off, not knowing what the future may hold for my Nana.

I miss my Papa just as much. It's been almost a year since he passed, and every day I get ready to come to Quinnipiac, I see the Folded Flag my Nana gave me at the funeral.

I loved him so much, and he never shied away from making sure I was safe, holding my hand as he told me, "I am always here for you, AJ; losing you would crush me."

What crushes me now is a woman who did not show much emotion at her husband's funeral, where I read a letter that I wrote about how much I love my Papa in front of everyone.



ILLUSTRATION BY ANTHONY ANGELILLO

It was the first time, publicly, that I said I almost killed myself, and I thanked him for being the best grandfather I could have ever asked for.

We have only discussed my Papa a few times, and I wonder if my Nana misses him.

From the outside, it could look like she doesn't care, but a person with Alzheimer's and dementia may hear the news as if hearing it for the first time and grief comes out through their mood and behavior instead of words.

Since my Nana's decline has started, my family has formed plenty of opinions about her. Watching someone you love change is confusing and putting her in a box can feel easier than keeping up with her on a given day.

I do not see her in that way. With or without Alzheimer's and dementia, she is still my grandmother, and I treat her like one. When she smiles because she sees my face, or squeezes my hand while I am driving with her, I see the same Granny Apple.

The same Granny Apple who drove me to sleepovers at her house with my Papa, helped me get ready for school every day because my parents were at work, or was the first person I went to after getting out of an inpatient facility after almost taking my life. I still miss the person she was before the disease and I am not going to pretend otherwise.

If someone you love is starting to change, trust what you are seeing, even if you are the only one saying it out loud. For families who do not know where to start, the Alzheimer's Association runs a free 24/7 Helpline at 800-272-3900.