

Flint Local 432 concert venue makes a comeback downtown via Red Ink Flint

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Whitcomb, 30, of Flint, cuts a piece of drywall while working on the new interior of the Local 432 at 124 West First Street. Whitcomb was a regular at the Local as a young man and said he's excited for the next generation of young people that will be going to concerts downtown.

FLINT, Michigan -- After years of opening and closing and moving from place to place, the Flint Local 432, an all-ages alcohol-free concert venue, has found a permanent home.

For real this time.

The Local, as it's usually referred to, will be one of the various programs operating under the umbrella organization of Red Ink Flint, currently under construction downtown.

Joel Rash, who's heading the effort, began promoting local shows downtown when he was 18 years old. The Local's original location was 432 South Saginaw St. (now Brown Sugar Cafe) and opened in 1984. Keeping the same name, it changed addresses throughout downtown before officially closing its doors in 2005.

Now 45, Rash said he's well past the age when he would stay up watching bands all night, but he wants kids to have the same experience he had as a young man in downtown Flint.

"I don't want to be down here and be part of the night-to-night activity of the club. I want to be down here for the day-to-day," Rash said, sitting in a makeshift upstairs office of the building that still under construction.

"So I'll be the grouchy old guy that makes sure the insurance is paid up, that all the right paperwork has been filed with the state of Michigan, that the heating and cooling system works."

No opening date is set, but construction workers said that sometime in the spring they should be ready to rock and roll at the new location at 124 West First St.

Jeremy Whitcomb, 30, of Flint, is doing contract work for Rash, putting up drywall and doing other interior work to get the place up to code. When that's all set, he said he'll start building the stage and sound booth.

As a former Local regular, he said he's looking forward to having it available for the next generation of young people looking to go out and listen to, or create, music.

"I went to the Local a lot when I was a kid," he said. "It was fun. It was just a bunch of kids. Kids with music. It was sweet. What happened really was, it made kids want to have bands. People would start bands because they would have a place to play."



Courtesy Joel Rash

Jason Kotarski, 32, is an associate pastor for Wildwind Community Church in Flint Township and said when he was younger, the Local gave him a place to fit in.

"I didn't really feel like I had a place, and the local gave me that. They were just normal guys playing guitars making music of their own and that was really compelling to me," he said.

Kotarski now volunteers on Saturdays, cleaning the place to help Whitcomb and other workers keep making progress.

"It just really made a difference in my life and I think it's affected me in such a huge way that I wanted to make sure that other kids like me have a place to go in their spare time," he said.

The Local is only one of the programs Red Ink Flint will offer. The group hosted the [Buckham Alley Festival](#) last summer, which involved other businesses and artists. Rash said he's looking forward to hosting a variety of events and opportunities for all kinds of artists.

Red Ink's mission is to provide a space for artists to work as well as showcase their talent. What makes the new two-story space unique is that in addition to work and gallery space, the downstairs can function as a performance venue -- the Local.

Red Ink Flint was originally located near the Flint Farmer's Market but [closed its doors](#) in 2009 before it officially gained nonprofit status.

In 2010, after he was laid off from his job at the University of Michigan-Flint, Rash said it seemed like a good opportunity to continue the work the original group had started. And a way to bring back the Local.

"We started looking into it and realized that the Red Ink concept, even though that first crack at it hadn't succeeded, was sustainable. The concept was good and there was still a need," Rash said.

He formed a board of directors, got the nonprofit status, secured funding and is back doing what he started as a teenager.

"A lot of people who do these all over the country, who do concert promotions, do it through high school and college and then they move on to whatever they're doing next, and I never really found a next that I wanted to do more than this," he said.