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## Bobby Bones raises \$2M more for St. Jude, thanks to Garth Brooks

Over the past three years, iHeartMedia radio personality Bobby Bones raised roughly \$3.8 million for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. In one surprise-filled, star-studded evening at the Ryman Auditorium, he added \$2 million more on Monday night.

Bones braved a nasty case of the flu to host his second Bobby Bones & The Raging Idiots' Million Dollar Show for St. Jude. This year's lineup included The Band Perry, Rascal Flatts, Sam Hunt and Caitlyn Smith. Then Bones delighted the sold-out audience with unannounced performances from Brothers Osborne, Thomas Rhett and Garth Brooks. While the Million Dollar Show is viewed as a celebration of past fundraising success more than an opportunity to collect more dollars, Brooks presented Bones with a \$2 million check for the hospital on stage. "What I love is this paycheck isn't going to you, and I know that's what you love about it, too," Brooks said as he handed Bones the oversized check.

The men sang "Friends in Low Places" together as the audience sang along. Bones held the first Million Dollar Show in 2015 to mark \$1 million raised for the hospital. He had such a good time, he opted to make it an annual event. As happened with the inaugural event, when the first headlining artist signed on, others followed.

This year, Hunt and The Band Perry led the way.



"What's great about the artists in Nashville is I can just call them," Bones said. "We did it last year and it was so great and we got to raise money and awareness, and a lot of times awareness is more important. We always want there to be some sort of surprise in the show. It's a lot of fun, and I wasn't going to miss it. I may pass out on stage, but I wasn't going to miss the show." Before Bones moved to Nashville in 2013 to launch "The Bobby Bones Show" in the morning drive time spot on WSIX, the Arkansas native thought St. Jude was "just a hospital in Memphis." Then he visited the facility. Bones was badly injured in a fall as a child and spent many weeks in a hospital recuperating. The care and effort he saw the staff at St. Jude dedicate to not only

medical breakthroughs but also to making sure patients and families had the highest quality of life resonated with him.

"I went into this place and I saw all these kids who weren't sad," he said. "It's in Memphis because it's in the middle of the country and they bring people from all over the country in. If you have a cancer they're working on, you're in for free. Once I understood it was more than brick and mortar in Memphis, but a hospital in the middle of the country ... for the world, then I really understood and wanted to learn more about it."

The evening kicked off with Bones performing with his duo, The Raging Idiots, backed by a house band that included country singer and Bones' girlfriend, Lindsay Ell, country singer and well-known fiddle player Natalie Stovall and "Outskirts of Heaven" singer Craig Campbell.

The Band Perry followed with a choreographed, high-energy version of its

hit "Done" as well as a medley of pop songs. Brothers Osborne followed with "Stay a Little Longer," Hunt cranked out his breakthrough hit "Leave the Night On"; and Rascal Flatts got fans singing along with "Life is a Highway."

"What Bobby Bones is doing is so cool and his group is so special," said Flatts' Joe Don Rooney. "He's got a good spirit to him. He's giving back in a huge way, and it's so special. We've been to St. Jude, and it's eye opening, it's humbling. God made special people to work at these places and do the things they do. They don't have a glass half full mentality. They have a glass full mentality."

Country newcomer Smith said her emotional connection to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital intensified with the birth of her son five months ago.

"It really hits home in a different way," she said. "It's an absolute honor to do anything for them, and I'm just happy to be here."



The Band Perry performs at the Bobby Bones Million Dollar Show at Ryman Auditorium on Monday, Jan. 9, 2017. (Photo: Larry McCormack / The Tennessean)