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Many remember George Winston from his Windham Hill Records days. He is requesting folks bring a nonperishable food item to his April 14 concert at The Kate for the Shoreline Soup Kitchens and Pantries.

# Winston performs to benefit SSKP

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**OLD SAYBROOK** » George Winston is not just a Grammy Award winner who ranks among contemporary music's most recognizable and graceful pianists. He's not solely the master of tone and invention whose dreamy renditions virtually force his millions of listeners to meet his music with ears open and eyes closed.

Nor is he simply the versatile solo artist who, customarily clad in stocking feet, performs everything from playful yet wistful interpretations of Vinçe Guaraldi's soundtrack to the "Peanuts" animated specials to bluesy tunes inspired by New Orleans' Professor Longhair to covers of The Doors.

"I like the idea of doing something besides playing music," said the 65-year-old, who will appear at The Kate on Tuesday evening, in a recent telephone interview.

Specifically: he's asking — but not requiring — that all attendees bring a nonperishable food item to support the Shoreline Soup Kitchens and Pantries, which provides food and fellowship to those in need in 11 Shoreline towns. He's also donating all proceeds from CD sales to the SSKP.

The self-described "rural folk piano" player has made a tradition out of encouraging donations to a local food pantry wherever he is giving a concert since 1986, when he was looking for a way to give back to the places he visited while on tour.

For the multi-platinum-selling recording artist, who's also recorded benefit albums for those affected by 9/11, to help Gulf Coast residents in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, and to heal the Louisiana wetlands from the BP oil spill, hunger is a bottom-line issue.

"I did some research and came to the realization that food — that's it," the California-based Winston said. "Shelter is some place on planet Earth, whether it be under a bridge or in your car. You can

get water from a fountain. But where are you going to get food legally? If you can get meals, you can pick yourself up. You can function."

The simple reality of that 29-year-long recognition is in keeping with the unassuming flannel shirt, jeans and, yes, stocking feet that is Winston's trademark attire in his over 100 solo concerts a year in America and Asia. It also conforms to a musical presentation which the Boston Globe described as "pithy and free of excess," as well as the spare seasonal mood music for which he is known.

That evocation of hushed forests blanketed in snow, majestic mountains, and sunlit streams is a product of his upbringing, he said. Although born in Michigan, Winston was raised primarily in Montana, an environment that inspired "Autumn," "December," and "Winter Into Spring," a trilogy of albums he recorded for the Windham Hill label in the early 1980s that is credited with ushering in New Age jazz.

"There are such seasonal extremes in Montana," said the plain-spoken Winston. "That framed how I do everything. In eastern Montana, there was no TV or radio. The seasons were the entertainment."

Until his teenage years, that is, when an organ blast at a local record store transformed his world. It was Ray Manzarek of The Doors, and it inspired him to incorporate some rendition of the psychedelic classic rock band into every performance.

Winston's show will also include melodic folk piano and pieces with New Orleans sound, rhythm and blues, and the ebullient stride piano of the 1930s Big Band musician Thomas "Fats" Waller.

Imbuing it all, naturally, will be the nourishing sense that, along with the sheer enjoyment promised by Winston's transcendent music, those attending will be supporting those in need on the Shoreline, according to Patty Dowling, SSKP's executive director.



The iconic pianist George Winston.

"This is his second concert at The Kate to benefit SSKP, and we are so honored and grateful that he's chosen us as a recipient," Dowling said. "It's wonderful to be able to offer this unique opportunity to help feed the hungry on the Shoreline."

Particularly when the featured performer takes the stage in stocking feet.

George Winston will appear at the Katharine Hepburn Cultural Arts Center at 7:30 p.m. on Tuesday, April 14, 300 Main St. Old Saybrook. For tickets and information, visit [katharinehepburntheater.org](http://katharinehepburntheater.org) or call 877-503-1286.

*Lisa Reisman, the author of the recently released "5 Months 10 Years 2 Hours," will be the featured speaker at Yale's Program for Humanities in Medicine, 5 to 6 p.m. on April 14, at the Beaumont Room, 333 Cedar St., New Haven.*