

Hitting The Right Notes For A Half-Century

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The spirit of music created by the Northport Community Band spans an entire coastline.

One of the two remaining charter members from the band's inception in 1959 travels all the way from his current home in Florida back to the bandstand overlooking beautiful Northport harbor two or three times each summer to play.

"He'll be coming more this year," assured Band founder and director Robert Krueger.

This summer celebrates a half-century of Americana music at the hands of Krueger, who originally started the band with 17 high school students, two adults,

and a desire to perform for the community.

"We started out small and inconspicuous, you could say," said Krueger. Not so for the current band roster, which now boasts about 80 to 85 musicians and performs weekly in July for a crowd of anywhere from 1,000 to 5,000 people.

"The beauty of a community band, and being a conductor," he said, "is that you become a part of the community. It has a purpose."

The band plays different selections for each concert, but a mainstay of their repertoire is Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture. Krueger describes it as "a highlight" of the band's final concert of the season. The band's exciting rendition features dueling canons. Other memorable tunes

include the band's theme, as well as songs adapted from Jack Daniel's (of the whiskey) Tennessee town band from the late nineteenth century. A CD featuring these favorites will be released on the band's first performance on July 3, where Krueger anticipates a large crowd for the band's 50th season.

"We have a large and extremely loyal audience," said Krueger. "Northport Park is the place to be on Thursday evenings."

Northport Park has also become the place to play on Thursday evenings, as Krueger noted that due to their popularity, participation in the band is now by invitation only.

"The bandstand can only hold so many people!" he said.

The members of the band fuse musical talent and a bond with each other. Krueger describes the band as both "like a family," and "quite an accomplished group of players." Included in this group is Associate Music Director of the band Don Sherman, a graduate and current music teacher at Northport-East Northport schools. Sherman joined the band as a high school student and has been the associate director for over 20 years.

Sherman is an illustration of devotion to both the community and music as a whole.

"I remember when Don first picked up an instrument, he was very talented," said Krueger. "I don't think there would be a Northport Community Band without him."

Krueger's own experiences with the band have been immeasurably positive.

"I always feel that I'm the most fortunate one of the group," he said of his experiences as director.

"Together, we're creating something that wasn't there before. People shouldn't forget that we're giving a lot, but we're receiving a lot in return."



Director Robert Krueger, left, and Associate Director Sherman in front of the Northport Community Band's performance space.



Performances of the Northport Community Band draw thousands of music lovers.