

Community Band Keeps On Growing

The Orangeville Banner

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By Adam Martin-Robbins



Orangeville Community Band is like a family — a really large, diverse family, says musical director John Wervers

“We’ve got people from all walks of life, all age groups from high school upward, from across the county and beyond,” he said. “It’s really a sense of family and community.”

The band was started two years ago by some like-minded individuals who thought it was time Orangeville, which had grown considerably over the last decade or so, was once again home to a community band.

“I was approached and asked if I would direct the band,” said Wervers, who teaches at Westside Secondary School. “There was a sense from individuals in the community that ... the town has grown significantly, there’s got to be a lot of musicians in the community.”

Orangeville Community Band (OCB) held its first rehearsals in September 2007 and about eight people showed up, he said. During the course of the year, the band grew to 35 members and performed five concerts.

Then, in 2008, the membership jumped to 55 and the number of shows doubled to 10.

That year the band teamed up with the local legion and performed a Remembrance Day concert at New Hope Community Church. Then it “spread Christmas cheer” with a series of holiday season shows, including performances at the Avalon Retirement Lodge, Lord Dufferin

Centre and the Orangeville Mall, before capping off with a concert at New Hope Community Church. That last show also served as a fundraiser for the Holiday Hamper Program.

"We're giving back to the community, which is important," said Wervers. "We're trying to really be, in the biggest sense, a community ensemble."

OCB is continuing the spirit of giving this year with its next performance at 2 p.m. on Sunday (Nov. 22) at Orangeville District Secondary School, which is a benefit concert for Community Living Dufferin. Tickets cost \$10.

That show will be followed by a series of Christmas concerts starting Dec. 3 culminating with the New Hope Community Church Show on Sunday Dec. 13 at 7:30 p.m.

In that same vein, OCB also does two educational outreach concerts in the spring with local schools that have their own bands.

"The idea is a focus on youth and instrumental music and joy of playing together," said Wervers, noting that each school gets a chance to strut its stuff. "Then it culminates in the finale, one group of 140 people performing in one mass band."

With members as young as 15 right on up into the golden years, there's a lot of teaching and learning going on in the band itself, said Wervers.

"The age distribution is excellent in this group," he said. "Some of the experienced players can be real mentors to the young people."

And OCB is always looking for new members — young or old — to join the family. Interested musicians should be at least 15 years old and have a couple of years experience.

"We're not a marching band," he said. "We try to create a repertoire so we meet the needs of most of the musicians. (Of course), you want your music to be audience friendly (too)."

For information about the band, contact Wervers at 519-925-6149, Stan Elliotson at 519-941-6569 or visit the band's website at www.orangevillecommunityband.ca.