

Harman Family Bluegrass Band Gears Up for 46th Annual Concert in Godfrey

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
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GODFREY - The Lewis and Clark Community College Bluegrass Concert, hosted by the Harman Family Bluegrass Band, is a beloved January tradition for many people in the Riverbend region. The band will perform for their 46th year on Jan. 13, 2024.

“We continued on and it kept — well, that’s one thing I can say, it didn’t get any bigger because it was a sellout the first year. It didn’t grow, it just kept going,” said patriarch Mike Harman. “Something had to go right.”

Mike didn't necessarily expect the band to grow like it did. He started the Harman Trio with his sister Lori and brother Bull several years ago, and it expanded to the Harman Family when Mike's wife Stacy and Bull's wife Tammy joined in. Now, Mike's sons and nephew also play in the band, and they have several special guests who will join them on Jan. 13.

While the band's lineup has changed over the years, the show itself is consistent every time. Many folks even buy the same seats from year to year, so they can chat with the people around them that they see every January at the Bluegrass Concert.

"It's been a sell-out the majority of the time except a few times for weather and COVID and that baloney. But otherwise, tickets have sold fast," Mike added. "As time went on, people passed away and some people can't drive after dark and things change, but it still holds its own at 46."

This encourages the Harman Family, even as their middle son has retired from the music scene and the family experienced their share of hardships over the past few years. Mike recently lost a leg and feeling in his right hand, so they hired a fill-in banjo player who was then killed in a car accident a month ago.

While they have had their ups and downs, they are always revitalized by the crowd at the January shows. Mike said the Lewis and Clark venue makes them more nervous than if they were playing for a crowd of 10,000 people somewhere else, mostly because they want to put on a good hometown show for their friends and neighbors.

But this is also why they enjoy the show so much. They like playing for the folks they know and love.

"It makes you want to keep putting on as good of a show and entertaining people as good as you can," Mike explained. "That's what we play for. The more they enjoy it, the more we enjoy playing. People say, 'You don't enjoy playing unless you get clapped for.' I say, 'No, we enjoy playing no matter what. We just hope that you enjoy it.'"

This year's concert promises to be another success, with several special guests and a grand finale that Mike teases as the best part of the show. The Mo Pitney Family will perform with the Harmans once again, and fan-favorites Jeremy and Corrina Stephens will travel from Nashville to take the stage at Lewis and Clark.

Over the years, the Harman Family has branched out to different genres of music, from country and gospel to bluegrass and a few favorite showtunes. They even throw in a rock song every now and then, which is especially fun for Mike as a former 1970s

teenager. But for the most part, this is the same show it was 46 years ago, and the family has the same attitude toward each other and music as they did when Mike, Lori and Bull started as a trio: They love it.

“Things have changed in the very recent years because of my leg and things going on all over in the country and stuff, but it’s still the same show, still exciting, people are still wanting to go,” Mike said. “You can forget the day coming and just live for the show. Forget about cares and just enjoy the program. That’s all I can say. That’s why we play.”

The Lewis and Clark Community College Bluegrass Concert starts at 7 p.m. on Jan. 13, 2024, at Lewis and Clark Community College. To purchase tickets, contact Stacy at 618-278-4422 or 618-917-7355 or call Lori at 618-420-2532. Visit HarmansBluegrass.com for more information about the Harman Family Bluegrass Band.