

Moonlighters Shining A Swinging Light on Big Band

Band will give a concert for Villagers for Veterans on June 9 at La Hacienda Regional Recreation Complex.

By **MICHAEL FORTUNA**
Daily Sun Staff Writer

In its shortened season, The Moonlighters big band wanted to close things with a fundraiser near to the hearts of some of the musicians.

For the band's concert, which will take place at 6:30 p.m. June 9 at La Hacienda Regional Recreation Complex, proceeds will go to Villagers for Veterans. Several of the band members are veterans, making this a special cause for them.

"It's a great way to raise some money for the cause," group leader Len Savery said.

Tickets for the concert are \$12.50 for Villages residents and their guests and are available by calling Marie Bogdonoff at 516-220-5068 or visiting villagersforveterans.org.



John DeClerk | Daily Sun

Mike Koman, of the Village of Liberty Park, practices with The Moonlighters band at La Hacienda Regional Recreation Complex.

The resident 18-piece big band also will feature vocalists Zanna Duckett and Diana Arlt, with the second half of the show featuring a tango performance from Susan and Mark O'Brien.

"We're fortunate to put together a nice library of music with some unusual arrangements," said Savery, of the Village of Caroline. "It's very danceable and enjoyable to listen to."

Concerts Make A Comeback

Villagers for Veterans, which Bogdonoff started six years ago,

supports severely wounded veterans help regain their independence through various programs.

"I was thrilled with the idea (of the concert)," said Bogdonoff, of the Village of Pine Ridge. "That was very generous and wonderful of Len (to do this)."

Attendees can expect to hear a variety of music from the 1940s, '50s and '60s that is both pleasing to the feet and the ears. The group will unveil a version of the Diamonds' "Little Darlin'."

"Even if they can't dance, they can come and enjoy the sights and sounds of the big

band," said Savery, who also plays trumpet in the group.

While the band was on hiatus last year due to the coronavirus pandemic, a couple of members passed away from non-COVID-related illnesses, and a few others moved out of the area.

The group eventually recruited about five new members.

Band's Beginnings

Savery had formed the Moonlighters while living in Cape Cod, Massachusetts — that version lasted about 25 years. It stayed busy during the summer, with some monthly gigs in the town of

Sandwich, Massachusetts.

"I gave the history of the song before we played it, a few tidbits like who played it, who wrote it," Savery said. "The band gets tired of hearing it, but the audience enjoys hearing it."

Savery started the new version in February 2017 after getting to know many of the musicians in The Villages.

"The band was one thing I missed from leaving the cape," Savery said.

Adventures With The Trumpet

Savery had put the trumpet away in junior high school when he chose football over the band. Some 25 years went

by before Savery decided to return to the instrument, which was spurred on by his song when he brought the trumpet home to learn to play in the school band.

Savery joined the Chatham Band in Cape Cod, and through his experiences with that group, he formed the Moonlighters.

"It was a labor of love," Savery said.

After this next performance, the Moonlighters will take the summer off, then reconvene some time around the first week in September.

Staff writer Michael Fortuna can be reached at 352-753-1119, ext. 5273, or michael.fortuna@thevillagesmedia.com.