

The Moonlighters Swing Band Hosting Free Concert, Dance

The concert is scheduled for Thursday at 6 p.m. at La Hacienda Recreation Center.

By FRANK ROSS
Daily Sun Staff Writer

Len Savery would like everyone in The Villages to be dancing — to the beat of his swing band.

Savery, of the Village of Belvedere, is introducing the Moonlighters to The Villages with a free concert, scheduled for 6 p.m. Thursday in La Hacienda Recreation Center's Carmen Miranda Room.

When Savery was in high school, he had to make a tough choice between the music he loved and the football he longed to play. He chose football and, as quarterback, led his team to the school's first unbeaten season. It was a record that stood for 57 years.

During those 57 years, he went on to attend college and became a custom home builder for 40 years in his native Massachusetts.

While building those homes, he found his way back to the music.

In addition to founding the Cape Cod Moonlighters in 1989, he founded, managed and was lead trumpet player for the Sandwich Concert Band in Massachusetts from 1982 to 2011 and became the music director from 2012 to 2015 before moving to The Villages in October 2016.

"I've always had a love for music," Savery said. "When my son wanted to start playing, it took me about a year to get back to where I wanted to be so I could help him."

After that, he just kept playing his trumpet and organizing bands.

His current 18-member Villages version of the Moonlighters is a mirror image of his earlier effort in terms of style and purpose. **1**

2 American Family Theater.

"I love this style of music," Duckett said. "It's wonderful and never goes out of style."

She shares vocals with Savery and Marge Phillips, of the Village of Osceola Hills. In between songs, Savery likes to serve up a little information about the history of the music and the bands who made the original recordings.

Keeping the beat, Bill Supino, of the Village of Springdale, has played drums for bands of every style. He started playing in his high school marching band and is happy to pick up the sticks without hesitation.

"I've played everything from funk to rock, jazz, soul and rhythm and blues, but swing is one of my favorite styles," Supino said.

Bob Watkins, of the Village of Chatham, plays lead alto sax and clarinet. When he presses his lips to a reed, good things happen. Watkins is the consummate professional who draws on a lifetime of experience.

When he performed with the orchestra for "West Side Story," he played nine different woodwind instruments. He began touring professionally with stage bands at age 14 with permission from his mother.

"I was very fortunate to have the ability to start playing when I was very young," Watkins said. "I worked hard and enjoyed the big band style. I'm very happy to be back with a great group of musicians."

Doors open at 5:30 p.m. The concert is free to Villages residents, with about 250 seats and a large dance floor available. Those attending are invited to bring their own drinks and snacks.

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1 "Jazz is a popular form of music, but you can't dance to it," Savery said. "We play music that was created for dancing. We play all of the great dance tunes."

Their weekly practice session began with a cacophonous, ear-splitting racket as each of the musicians tuned up their instruments and loosened their lips. When Savery stepped up to the podium to kick off the first number, "Alexander's Ragtime Band," the room was transported back in time.

With a definite reduction of the pace, lead female vocalist Zanna Duckett, of the Village of Gilchrist, delivered the classic "(I Love You) For Sentimental Reasons" in a voice that could have been ripped from the pages of time.

Duckett has a bachelor's degree in musical theater from the University of Tampa and has performed all over the country in addition to a four-month tour with the **2**