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THE WEATHER TODAY, C2

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Loyola, Michigan Advance to Final 4

Ramblers continue historic run to San Antonio by defeating Kansas State. Sports, B1

NATIONAL NEWS

THOUSANDS PROTEST ACROSS THE NATION FOR GUN REFORM

Summoned to action by student survivors of the Florida school shooting, hundreds of thousands of teenagers and their supporters rallied in the nation's capital and cities across America on Saturday to press for gun control in one of the biggest youth protests since the Vietnam era. **A8-9**



Alex Brandon | The Associated Press

Looking west, thousands of people fill Pennsylvania Avenue during the "March for Our Lives" rally in support of gun control Saturday in Washington.



Evan Frost | The Associated Press

Kimani Hogan, 18, heads to the state Capitol during the Minnesota "March for Our Lives" in St. Paul. An estimated 18,000 rallied after a student-led march.



Michael Johnson | Daily Sun

Protesters hold up signs and chant while gathering in the square during a "March for Our Lives" event led by local students at Lake Sumter Landing Market Square.

FRENCH POLICE OFFICER CALLED A HERO AFTER HOSTAGE SWAP

Known for his courage, Lt. Col. Arnaud Beltrame was acclaimed by French authorities as a hero Saturday after his death from wounds the day before. **World News, A6**

THAT'S AMAZING

AMATEUR ROCKET SCIENTIST BLASTS OFF

A self-taught rocket scientist who believes the Earth is flat propelled himself about 1,875 feet into the air in his home-made vessel before a hard landing in the Mojave Desert that left him slightly bruised. "Mad" Mike Hughes said he hurt his back but is otherwise fine and was "relieved" after Saturday's launch near Amboy, California. The launch was originally scheduled for November. It was scrubbed several times after logistical issues with the Bureau of Land Management. — The Associated Press

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A DAILY SUN SPECIAL REPORT

Local Entertainment Brings The Beat Back



George Horsford | Daily Sun

Johnny Wild & the Delights, left to right, Amanda Warren, Whitney Abell-Couch and Andy Matchett, known as Johnny Wild, entertain the crowd. Matchett formed what is now Johnny Wild and the Delights after starring in "The Buddy Holly Story."



Michael Johnson | Daily Sun

Members of Uncle Bob's Rock Shop worked as sound engineers in The Villages, doing audio work for Katie Belle's, Savannah Center and other venues before forming their group.



Submitted photo

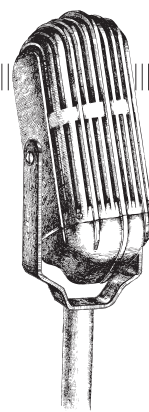
Although American Martian is a fairly new group, band members have been together since 2004, when they were cast by Disney to perform as "Mulch, Sweat, & Shears" at Disney's Hollywood Studios.

Live Entertainment is an important part of the lifestyle in a community that puts on three concerts every night.

By KRISTEN FIORE
Daily Sun Staff Writer

It's a nightly ritual. Melodies flow from the squares, up and down the streets and past the lines of parked golf carts, driven by residents eager to take seats around the evening's performer and dance in front of the stage. Each night, the three town squares are transformed into bodies of music, and the heart of it all pumps on the pavilions and behind the scenes. Entertainment is scheduled every night of the year, even Christmas. And not at just one location, but three commercial gathering spots conveniently spaced out across The Villages. Thousands are drawn to enjoy each night's local entertainment. Just as widely known as it is a place in which golf carts are the preferred mode of travel, The Villages' nightly entertainment on the squares is one of its signature calling cards. "It's one of the first things I talk about when describing The Villages to someone," said Brian Russo, director of Entertainment.

Please See ENTERTAINMENT, A18



ALSO INSIDE

Loyal fans flock the squares to support their favorite local musicians. **A22**
Dunning Shaw, Mike and Terrie, and Billie Thatcher share their stories. **A24**
Entertainers make charity a priority by performing at benefit concerts. **A25**

from the front page

A DAILY SUN SPECIAL REPORT

ENTERTAINMENT

Continued from A1

"It's one of the many things that makes us so unique. Nowhere else can someone experience this. Free live entertainment every single night is a mind-blowing concept, and we do it at three different locations!"

It's mind-blowing, indeed. The Villages schedules 1,095 nightly entertainment acts for its three town squares a year and has contracts with nearly 120 bands, DJs and musical acts.

It's credited with helping generate Sumter County's \$684,797 in tourism tax revenues, and a Sumter County commissioner said it's a selling point to attract more residents to the county's fastest-growing Metropolitan Statistical Area over the last decade.

Who They Are

The Villages has become a unique market for local musicians, and entertainers have become familiar faces in the community for those who go to their events and dance to their music every day.

From the energetic events of Scooter The DJ to the musical harmonies of Rocky & the Rollers, there is a wide range of music for entertainment-seekers to choose from.

Pat Reilly, of the Village of Amelia, said that she appreciates the variety of music and the fact that there is music for every generation in The Villages.

"It's a bonus because you feel like you're on vacation all the time," Reilly said. "Sometimes we just take the golf cart out for an hour and sit and listen."

While there is a variety in musical genres, every artist who performs on the square has the same goal: to make their audience happy.

David Sanders, who sings and plays the guitar and drums in Uncle Bob's Rock Shop, said the group focuses on the music of their youth, since they are



Johnny Wild & the Delights entertain the crowd at Spanish Springs Town Square. The Villages schedules 1,095 nightly entertainment acts a year for its three town squares and has contracts with nearly 120 bands, DJs and musical acts.

George Horsford | Daily Sun

the same age of a large number of Villagers and love the same things, like David Bowie, The Who and ZZ Top.

"The energy that we have is all about the music," Sanders said. "A like-minded group of people creates a like-minded cause."

Sanders said he once spent time with Bruce Springsteen when he was playing in the same hotel Springsteen was staying in with his band.

"He told me to never play a song I don't love, because everyone will know it," Sanders said. "So that's our only rule. If a guy in the band doesn't enjoy it, we don't play it."

Although Andy Matchett, the

lead singer in Johnny Wild & the Delights, is a little younger than residents of The Villages, he grew up listening to the music of the '50s and '60s, and now he works to make sure that music is preserved.

"There's a fun and universal element to the music," Matchett said. "To me, the music of the '50s and '60s is the ultimate, the sweet spot, the original."

Matchett formed what is now Johnny Wild & the Delights after starring in "The Buddy Holly Story" and not wanting to stop playing the music and working with some of the people.

Matchett is well-versed in theater, so while being on stage

as someone else comes naturally, he thinks of Johnny Wild as an extension of himself.

Matchett said that one reason he performs as Johnny Wild is because "Andy Matchett" didn't have as much of a '50s ring to it. He also thinks the tone wouldn't be the same if he performed as himself.

"When you're bringing all elements of yourself onto the stage, it gets a little heavy,"

Matchett said. "As Johnny, it's still me, but it's more like I can just focus on a certain part of me. There's the fun, the confidence, the excitement. There's a playful nature to it."

Like Johnny Wild & the Delights, American Martian is made up of musicians who played with each other before and didn't want to stop.

Although American Martian is a fairly new group, the band

members have been together since 2004, when they were cast by Disney for a band called "Mulch, Sweat, & Shears" at Disney's Hollywood Studios.

After the show was closed in 2015, the group still wanted to play together and became American Martian.

Matthew Bloodwell, a drummer and singer in the group, said what sets them apart is that they're not just a cover band.

"Our front guy is more of an emcee than the lead singer, because everyone sings," Bloodwell said. "His forte is improv and comedy. Our direction is to play songs that everyone knows that are entertaining but have someone that is literally spending the entire show interacting with the audience."

This adds an extra level of entertainment, according to Bloodwell.

The audience in The Villages is something to look forward to for a lot of the acts that perform on the squares because of how enthusiastic they are.

A performance is a communication between the musicians and the audience, according to Bloodwell, and in The Villages, the communication is great.

"The audience really gets involved," Bloodwell said. "Sometimes at venues, you're like musical wallpaper, but it's not like that at all here. There are familiar faces every time we go out."

To Sanders, performing in The Villages is like a breath of fresh air.

"There have been ups and downs to being a musician," Sanders said. "It's been tough, and we've been on the road a lot. It's just a joy to be located in The Villages and be so close to such a wonderful crowd."

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*Financial Times Top 300 RIA candidate firms were scored based on six criteria: assets under management (AUM), AUM growth rate, years in existence, advanced industry credentials, online accessibility and compliance records.

from the front page

Continued from Previous Page

An Economic Trend

Not all of the entertainers in The Villages have always worked in music.

Matchett worked in automotive sales and didn't start thinking about a career in music until he was laid off from his job at Harley-Davidson.

"There wasn't a lot of upward mobility and relationship building in the business world," Matchett said. "It was a spreadsheet."

So he thought about what he could do best: singing and entertaining. Sure enough, it worked.

Members of Uncle Bob's Rock Shop were working as sound engineers in The Villages, doing audio work for Katie Belle's, Savannah Center and other venues before forming their group.

According to a recent news release by the Bureau of Economic Analysis, economic activity in arts and culture has increased nationwide for the fourth year in a row.

In 2015, employment in arts and culture increased 2.1 percent, according to the released data.

One of the categories that grew the most was performing arts, which includes writers, performers and independent artists.

Entertainment on the squares has provided economic growth in The Villages too, according to Doug Gilpin, Sumter County commissioner and chairman of the County Tourist Development Council.

"For Villages residents, the squares are a wonderful place to go down and have a good time and know that it's a constant and consistent thing that you can choose on your own schedule," Gilpin said. "For people outside of The Villages in Sumter County, it gives them the opportunity to come down and enjoy something that a rural community doesn't typically have."

The entertainment on the squares also have become

something of a tourist destination that could lead to more residents, according to Gilpin.

"People hear about all of the entertainment and activities going on, and they visit The Villages and end up buying a house," Gilpin said.

Rina Delmonico, of the Village of Bonita, said the nightly entertainment on the squares was one of the main reasons she decided to buy a home in The Villages.

In fact, she strategically chose the Village of Bonita so that she would be very near Lake Sumter Landing and right in the middle of Spanish Springs and Brownwood.

Delmonico and her husband are from Colorado and never saw themselves living in Florida until they visited some friends living in The Villages.

"We came down and they took us to the squares and out to eat," Delmonico said. "We rode the golf cart. Within a few months, we bought a house."

Now when friends visit her, the first thing Delmonico does is take them to all three squares.

"I can't even imagine The Villages without the squares," Delmonico said. "To be able to get in your golf cart and listen to music in good weather and meet your friends on the square is wonderful."

According to data provided by the Florida Department of Revenue, there was a nearly 6 percent increase in Sumter County's tourism tax revenue from 2016 to 2017.

Entertainment on the squares also aids in sales for businesses on the squares.

Gary Uptegraft, owner of Kilwins in Spanish Springs, said that about 90 percent of their business comes from people coming to entertainment on the squares.

"It brings more people to the square, and then more people are there to support the businesses," Uptegraft said. "It's a direct relationship."

George Suleiman, owner of Johnny Rockets in Lake Sumter Landing, said he



George Horsford | Daily Sun
Members of Johnny Wild & the Delights, from left, Amanda Warren and Andy Matchett, also known as Johnny Wild, entertain the crowd March 12 at Spanish Springs Town Square.



Michael Johnson | Daily Sun
Uncle Bob's Rock Shop member Mack Sanders plays his electric guitar as the band performs March 16 at Lake Sumter Landing Market Square.

pays attention to the entertainment schedule when making the schedule at the restaurant.

"Some nights I typically schedule a lot more people, depending on what band is playing," Suleiman said. "Rocky & the Rollers and Johnny Wild will bring in more volume, for example. Entertainment is definitely a big impact on business, so we are always looking at the schedule."

Sanders, Matchett and Bloodwell are just a miniscule portion of those involved in the national growth, but they're a big deal in The Villages.

Bloodwell said that everyone in American Martian had different jobs at one point, but now music is all they do.

"As a musician, when you first start playing music you're always hoping to be successful at it," Bloodwell said. "It's great to be able to be self-sustaining as a musician. It's very rewarding. I don't feel like I'm working for a living."

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from the front page

A DAILY SUN SPECIAL REPORT

What People Don't See

While it's rewarding, being a performer is a lot harder than it may look to some people.

Matchett said that now he works harder and more labor-intensive hours than he's ever worked.

"People see you doing what you love and think it's all just fun and games, but anyone who's been around it enough knows that it's more than that," Matchett said.

Matchett said that when he's not playing a show, he's running the business aspect of the band. That includes funneling phone calls, making phone calls, planning events, learning new songs and keeping up with the group's website and social media.

He also home schools his oldest child.

"So I balance that with my office work," Matchett said. "It's nonstop, but the 9 to 5 drag got a little repetitious for me, so I love the change of scenery."

Sanders said Uncle Bob's Rock Shop spends a great deal of time working on material. They also build and repair microphones and guitars.

"We're always strengthening our craft," he said.

Bloodwell said that performing on the squares feels sort of like a marathon.

"The four hours of playing doesn't feel as long as it sounds," Bloodwell said. "It's somewhat of a whirlwind, and I think it took us a little bit to get used to doing it so quickly, but it's a lot of fun."

Being an entertainer is a lot of work, but The Villages Entertainment is the sun that each act revolves around in this solar system.

There are a lot of moving parts, according to Russo.

Employees of The Villages Entertainment must review new and current acts, coordinate scheduling and oversee audio, cleaning, maintenance and bars.

"The main thing we have to be careful of is making sure the three squares contain



Michael Johnson | Daily Sun

Uncle Bob's Rock Shop member Bobby Dibble, right, holds out the microphone so fans, from left, Cheryl Lipka, Sue McComb, Helen Evans, and Terri Perreault, can lead the crowd in a part of the song 'Roadhouse Blues' at Lake Sumter Landing.



The Villages was built by a group of people who have the same idea I do about life. They want to offer something for people to give them the opportunity for happiness and joy. It's one of the best places I've ever been around."

DAVID SANDERS
member of Uncle Bob's Rock Shop

different types of music each night," Russo said. "It can be tough, especially when some groups are in high demand and have limited availability."

Mary Carlson is the booking coordinator for the squares, and she said she gets dozens of applications every week, and she and her team try to sort through each and every one of them to make sure they are always presenting the best performers every night.

Each new act is reviewed by a committee that looks at the group's song lists, performance quality, availability and costs, according to Carlson.

They then make the decision on if they should give the act a shot to perform on the square.

Even once an act is chosen to perform on the square, the process isn't over, according to Carlson.

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from the front page



Whitney Abell-Couch and Andy Matchett perform with Johnny Wild & the Delights. Matchett said the audiences in The Villages are the best he's ever played for.

Several of the acts can be seen performing in Katie Belle's and at the Savannah Center as well.

A few perform on cruises, and loyal fans are quick to hop aboard.

Sanders said he is thankful for all of the friends he has made on the squares.

"The Villages was built by a group of people who have the same idea I do about life," he said. "They want to offer something for people to give them the opportunity for happiness and joy. It's one of the best places I've ever been around."

Before forming Johnny Wild & the Delights, Matchett auditioned for and landed the lead role in the national tour of "The Buddy Holly Story" but ultimately turned it down because he would've been away from his kids.

"A couple months later we were fortunate enough to get the job in The Villages," Matchett said. "In the long run, this has been far more satisfying."

Matchett said that the audiences in The Villages are the best he's ever played for.

"When I was playing music for people in their 20s and 30s, there was a certain amount of judgment to it," Matchett said. "They're afraid to dance

and they're afraid of what other people will think. But out here in The Villages, the only thing people care about is that everyone is having a great time."

Matchett said people tell him he's onto better things, but he says, "No way."

"You'll have to drag me kicking and screaming," he said.

Kristen Fiore is a staff writer with The Villages Daily Sun. She can be reached at 352-753-1119, ext. 5270, or kristen.fiore@thevillagesmedia.com.

UPDATES ON THE SQUARE

Your Daily Sun and Daily Sun Mobile App, free and downloadable for both iPhone and Android devices, offers you a daily listing of entertainers on the squares. And for weather updates impacting entertainment, make sure push notifications are activated on the Mobile App or listen to AM-640 WVLC.



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Those who perform in The Villages have become familiar faces in the community.

Some of them sell merchandise, which people wear proudly to the squares. Some Villagers go as far as to make their own shirts and jackets.

ASK THE EXPERT

SINGER WEALTH MANAGEMENT
Keith Singer, JD CFP

Why the Stock Market Doesn't like Tariffs

In an effort to cut the trade gap and negotiate a more favorable trade agreement with China, President Trump recently announced tariffs of 25% on steel and 10% on aluminum. This means that the cost of purchasing these items from abroad will increase. This will ostensibly help American steel and aluminum companies become more profitable because their competition will need to raise their prices to cover the cost of the tariff. However, this means that all American companies that need to buy steel and aluminum for their products will have to pay more for those products. Therefore, those companies will make less profits and will need to raise prices. This could result in a loss of sales and potentially cause a loss of jobs.

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letter to the White House signed by leaders of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the National Retail Federation and other groups, the President was urged to consider that "The imposition of sweeping tariffs would trigger a chain reaction of negative consequences for the U.S. economy, provoking retaliation; stifling U.S. agriculture, goods and services exports; and raising costs for businesses and consumers"*

Additionally, foreign countries tend to retaliate by imposing tariffs on US exports. For instance, China has indicated that is now considering imposing tariffs on U.S. agricultural exports, wine and pork products. This would result in a loss of sales and profits to these U.S. industries and could reduce jobs in those industries as well.

We don't yet know how this will end or if the tariffs will become permanent and lead to a full scale trade war. However, the stock market dislikes uncertainty and until this is favorably resolved expect the possibility of continued volatility.

*NPR

Most economists agree that tariffs are bad for the economy. In a

Keith Singer is an attorney and Certified Financial Planner and he offers Advisory Services through Singer Wealth Advisors, a Florida Advisory firm.

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