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Concert band's summer series ready to pop

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Monday, June 12, 2006

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By The Union staff

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July 2008

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Community members enjoy a concert last year by the Nevada County Concert Band at Pioneer Park in Nevada City.

Submitted photo

The Nevada County Concert Band's Pioneer Park Picnic Pops concerts have become a county summertime tradition.

The band plays recognizable standards. It's classical music by Mozart or Beethoven; it's pop music from the '60s, '70s and beyond; it's Sousa marches or it's Broadway show tunes.

At every concert there is a little bit of everything to make everyone happy.

The Nevada County Concert Band has been presenting these concerts in the park since 1984. Pioneer Park offers a beautiful natural setting with an expansive green lawn surrounded by towering pine trees. Many families bring a table and chairs to sit comfortably while dining. Others spread out a blanket, sit cross-legged and have a picnic in the park.

The Nevada County Concert Band owes its origin to Cornish miner immigrants from England. Those Englishmen founded a number of all-brass bands in the Grass Valley/Nevada City area during the Gold Rush era of the 1850s. In those days, the bands played for parades and community celebrations.

The present nonprofit organization grew from these roots and has developed into one of the most active musical groups in the region. It is a group of 40 to 60 community volunteers with varying backgrounds in the musical arts whose members range from teens to retirees. True to its original charter, the band still performs mostly for parades and community events, including its annual appearance at the Nevada County Fair, the Fourth of July Parade and the Constitution Day Parade.

Playing under the baton of the band's conductor, <http://www.nccb.org/cheryl.htm>, the band presents a full season of ensemble music to the public. The concerts are free; donations are solicited to help cover operating expenses.

Harold George, a retired music teacher, has lived and worked in Grass Valley his entire life. He played when his father was a musician in one of the miner bands. At over 80 years old, he still believes in music as a way to keep life interesting and sees its educational value.

Emily Shultz, a seventh-grader at Lyman Gilmore, joined the band this year. She plays the flute, and there several band members she looks up to who help her with difficult pieces. Her mother brings her to and from weekly rehearsals.

Don Brandt plays the baritone saxophone and has all his life for jazz and dance bands. Now 92, he enjoys the weekly rehearsals and gets to remind the youngsters in the band how jazz is supposed to be played.

John Smiley, M.D., joined the band a few years back as a start to his retirement from Kaiser. As a trumpet player, he often plays solos and loves the camaraderie of his new friends.

The Nevada County Concert Band begins its busy summer concert season with the June 25 Pioneer Park Picnic Pops Concert.

Quickly following that are two concerts over the 4th of July weekend - the downtown parade and the Plumas County town of Graeagle's weekend celebration.

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On July 23 is the second Pops concert followed by the Nevada County Fair concert at the Pine Tree Stage in early August. The third Pops concert is on Aug. 27.

In early September, the band plays for Lake Wildwood residents at Commodore Park and then in downtown Nevada City prior to the Constitution Day parade.

What: Pioneer Park Picnic Pops Concert Series

When: 5 p.m., Sundays - June 25, July 23 and Aug. 27

Where: Pioneer Park Bandshell, Nevada City

Directions: Hwy. 49 east, take the Broad Street exit, go right onto Boulder Street. Turn right on Park Avenue and follow the signs to the park.

Price: Free, donations accepted

Additional information: 477-4787 or <http://www.nccb.org>

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