

DINING & ENTERTAINMENT

HoneyGrass performs at bluegrass awards



STRINGING ALONG: Standup bassist Karen May (left) and guitarist Marie Gustafson of HoneyGrass perform Nov. 20 on the Deerhurst Resort stage during the 31st annual Central Canadian Bluegrass Awards.

By Gillian Brunette

Huntsville was once again well represented at the 31st annual Central Canadian Bluegrass Awards, held at Deerhurst Resort Nov. 20 to 22.

Back with three nominations was popular local bluegrass group HoneyGrass. Also vying once again for the banjo player of the year award was Huntsville's Kenny Groomes.

While neither captured big prizes this year, Groomes, who plays with the band Traditionally Wound, has won the Central Canadian Banjo Player of the Year award numerous times.

HoneyGrass has garnered several nominations in the past and was named Most Promising Band of the Year while showcasing in Nashville at the International Bluegrass Music Association's Bluegrass Awards in 2007.

The three-day event at Deerhurst featured showcases, workshops, jam sessions, a Sunday gospel performance and the awards gala on Saturday night.

Nominated for Vocal Group of the Year, with two other nominations for Female Vocalist of the Year, HoneyGrass was at the awards for the fourth consecutive time and performed on the Friday evening.

"Three out of the four members of the original band were playing, that's myself, Marie Gustafson (guitar) and Ray Winterstein (banjo), with Dr. Mike Tirella from upstate New York filling in on guitar. Randy Morrison also helped us out on fiddle," said the band's standup bassist/vocalist

Karen May.

She added that the band is currently undergoing some personnel changes and will regroup over the winter months.

Since its inception, HoneyGrass has opened for a number of big bluegrass artists, and last year released their first indie CD titled *She's Running Wild*.

There are 14 songs on the album. Some are original songs and some covers, with a sprinkling of old country and gospel tunes, May said.

Those interested can purchase the CD at cdbaby.com, or from May at basslady@hotmail.com.

May grew up in Huntsville and began her musical career playing saxophone in Dr. Lynn Sargeant's Muskoka Big Band.

"I discovered bluegrass about 12 years ago and have attended the bluegrass awards event at Deerhurst for the past 10 years. Bluegrass is exciting music. It's very exacting, very precise," she said.

May would love to make the band her full-time career. "But realistically, in Canada, there are very few bluegrass bands that can make it. It's so far to travel to paying gigs, that it makes it impossible," she said.

Nevertheless, HoneyGrass is all but fully booked for the 2010 festival season, but will willingly take on extra bookings. "We are always looking for new places and new audiences."

Meanwhile, May is concentrating on her writing. "I've been writing more and more. I've written nine songs so far and we will be recording some of those when we get back into the studio."

Stephenson Lions Club dinner carries on a 30-year tradition



BLAST FROM THE PAST: The Utterson community hall as it looked at one of the first Stephenson's Lions Club Christmas dinners circa 1979.

Stephenson's Lions Club members have been serving up a free Christmas dinner to seniors of their district for 30 years.

Stan Stillar has been chairman of the seniors' turkey dinner since the late 1970s. Around 40 club members, their wives and community members prepare and serve the meal to about 175 diners at the Utterson community hall every year.

"We like to think it's kind of a community thing," says Stillar. "We have people who come out and make this happen, like the Daultry family and the Clarkes."

The Lions Club buys the food, and this year the turkeys will be cooked at Trio Village Grill in Port Sydney. The volunteers cook the vegetables and mounds of potatoes, and the pies are supplied by the United Church Women's clubs of Port Sydney and Utterson.

"I think it's about 30 years now," said Stillar. "The reason we started is because we like to give back to the community. They came up with the idea way back when that maybe doing something for the seniors would be a good idea."

The Lions mailed out 185 invitations to the seniors

of the Stephenson district this year and each has the proviso, "If your neighbour didn't get one and he's a senior, bring him along."

Charlie and Jean Carter of Port Sydney have been going to the dinner for eight years.

"It's always a nice evening and you see some friends that you only see once a year, and some friends you don't see again, because they have left us to the great beyond," said Charlie. "It's always a homemade dinner and they always give you plenty of food and if you want more you can always ask for more. They have a lot of young people helping and they're always enthusiastic."

The doors will open on this year's Stephenson's Lions Club Christmas dinner at 4 p.m. at the Utterson community hall on Sunday, Dec. 6.

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