



Lindsey Borgna/Index

Seniors Drew and Alex Kaizer play the chimes during practice for the college-age bell choir at First United Methodist Church on Tuesday. Drew and Alex have been playing hand bells for a 10 years.

Students perform with bell choir

BY KATE LINMAN
Staff Reporter

Seniors Alex and Drew Kaizer have been playing hand bells together for a decade. Now, the Kaizer twins share the passion for music with other hand bell performers at Truman State.

Alex and Drew began performing in bell choirs together in the seventh grade at their church in Ames, Iowa. They said they decided to join the bell choir because they didn't want to continue with vocal choir and bell choir was offered in seventh grade.

"It was a natural progression that most kids went through," Drew said. "It looked cool and sounded cool."

Alex and Drew said their family is the reason behind their passion for music.

"Our parents are musicians, and so are our grandparents, aunts and uncles," Alex said. "It wasn't hard to get plugged in. It was easy to learn how to do it [music] because you have that consistent environment of support and knowledge going on."

Both brothers play instruments aside from bells. Alex plays saxophone and Drew plays multiple percussion instruments.

Drew said bells aren't his favorite instrument to play, but he likes the ease of handling them compared to the percussion equipment he is used to playing.

Alex and Drew said they think playing bells is great for college students because they don't have to devote several hours of practice a night to maintain

their skill. Drew was a member of the Truman Statesmen Drumline his first semester and said it was fun but it required a large time commitment. This made bell choir seem more appealing.

While Drew prefers percussion to bells, Alex said bells are his favorite because of their convenience.

"I only have to practice one hour a week to get songs together," Alex said. "Band and ensembles, you have to tune, and it takes more hours of practice."

Alex and Drew became involved with bell choir in Kirksville during their first semester at Truman State after seeing the adult bell choir at First United Methodist Church. While they were looking at the bells after the performance, bell choir director Sarah Stock asked if they were interested.

After Alex mentioned he had bell choir practice to his friend Bridget Waller, Alex, Drew and Waller started talking about forming a college-age bell choir. Waller, who played bells at her high school, said she wanted to continue playing them, and was interested in the opportunity for a college-age bell choir.

"Drew and Alex presented the idea and I went along with it because of their enthusiasm," Stock said. "They are enthusiastic in my adult bell choir and so it just carries on, and it's a lot of fun."

Alex and Drew set out to look for students wanting to join, they said. After finding three more students, the brothers and Waller started the college-age bell choir at First United Meth-

odist Church during the Fall 2010 semester.

Because of busy schedules and low membership, the choir stopped practicing and performing last semester, Alex said.

However, renewed interest from members and new students wanting to join, brought the choir back this year. The college-age bell choir currently has 10 members, including ones who are not members of First United Methodist Church, Alex said. The experience of the members ranges from students who have been playing bells for several years, like Alex and Drew, to students who picked up a bell the first time this semester.

The bell choir members hope to put on a performance next semester, Alex and Drew said.

"Many people think of Christmas music when they think of bell choir, but there are cool compositions that people have written, pop music, I heard there is even Lady Gaga written for bells," Alex said.

The brothers said they also want to start playing more difficult pieces.

Alex and Drew enjoy bell choir because they have been playing together for so long. Drew said they have bell "insider jokes," and they can get away with playing bells side-by-side.

The two said they hope to continue playing bells in the future.

"It is so easy and you can play really cool music if you have a group of people who are really passionate and devoted and really good at playing bells," Alex said.

Time changes small town

Millard goes from bustling community to population of 75

BY EMILY BATTMER
Staff Reporter

Seven miles south of Kirksville, there's a small group of houses on the side of Highway 63. A couple of old farm houses with windows falling out might draw the eye, but the village almost might be unnoticeable if it weren't for the sign that reads "Millard Population: 75."

A century and a half ago, Millard looked much different. The area, defined as a village because of its small size and rural location, was once a tight-knit community full of family-owned businesses but has dwindled to a few houses, some vacant and some occupied by strangers to the community. As much as it has changed, the glory days of Millard live on in the memories of some of its residents.

One of those residents is Hollis Crawford. While Crawford technically lives just outside the village's borders, he considers himself part of the Millard community. Residents there don't have the amenities of being in a town, Crawford said. There are no stores, no Millard-sponsored public facilities and no police force. There is the Board, which is run like a city council, but there is no mayor.

The railroad, which was the original reason Millard was settled, is long gone. Millard's residents have to travel at least to Kirksville or La Plata for groceries, shopping and school. He said if people want something done — like having a street plowed — they have to do it themselves.

Unfortunately, many people don't do those tasks themselves, Ilene Baldwin said. As a result, Millard's once-lively, neighborly and well-maintained atmosphere has changed, she said. Baldwin, who recently moved out of Millard, said people don't keep up with the community the way they should. Many old buildings have been abandoned, junk has accumulated in some yards, and people aren't as friendly as they used to be, she said.

"It makes me feel bad," she said. "It could have been a good little town if they had kept up with things. It's not the same place it used to be. A different generation has moved in there."

In addition to the town's aging and the lack of buildings and land maintenance, some of the larger stores that opened in Kirksville forced some of Millard's shops out of business, Crawford said, and the village of Millard unfortunately seems to be on the down and out.

"I suppose it's slowly meeting its demise, just like all these other little communities," Crawford said. "Some of the other towns in Adair County used to be bustling communities back in the coal mine days, but now there's just nothing there."

Before the town started dwindling, it was home to stockyards, a coal yard, a blacksmith's shop, a grocery store, a hatchery, a filling station, a post office, a tavern that later became a church, other churches, a toy store and the old one-room school house, which served as the center of many memories for Millard's residents, Crawford said.

Baldwin said she remembers attending the school, which housed grades one through eight. Her grandparents, siblings and children attended the school, too, making it an important staple in her family's life for generations. Millard resident Pearl McMann, who was born in Millard, has lived there most of her life. She also remembered the one-room schoolhouse and the sense of community it created.

"The school used to bring everyone together," McMann said. "Now, the people don't socialize like they used to."

Some of McMann's favorite memories of Millard included programs hosted at the school, like pie suppers and school plays. Crawford agreed that church and school programs brought the community together, and that's how everyone knew everyone in the town. For financial reasons, the schoolhouse has been closed and gone since the 1960s, but New Hope Methodist Reformed Church, which is the oldest building in Millard, is still standing.

The church dates back to 1872 and recently was renovated with Crawford's help, he said. He said he grew up with that church, and it's the one thing that still bonds the community.

Church restoration is promising and meaningful for Crawford, who grew up attending the church and would like to see the community come together again.

The rest of the town also has sentimental value for these longtime citizens, Crawford, McMann and Baldwin said.

McMann said she still keeps close ties with the community's past and her family relations to it. She was born in her grandmother's Millard home in 1942, and still has the doll her grandmother had when she moved to Millard during the late 1800s. Her grandmother's house still is standing, she said, though it now is vacant.

Although Crawford has moved out of Millard before, he came back to manage the family's land and is living on the farm that was his old home, purchased by his parents in 1939.

And while the little village isn't the same as it used to be, Crawford said he still will plow a neighbor's garden or push the snow out of their driveway when they need it.

"They're not close friends like they used to be years ago, but they're still neighbors," he said. "We don't do that stuff for money — it's because we're neighbors. We help each other. We have to because there's no one else to turn to."

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