

Bluegrass show packs Woodslee hall

BY DANIEL SCHWAB

concert that filled Woodslee's St. John's Parish Hall to capacity Jan. 27.

About 300 fans of all ages came together to enjoy the bass and mandolin driven

tunes of both local group Prairie Siding and Ohio-based act New Found Road.

Bluegrass, a style that originated in the southern United States in the 1930s, seemed to resonate just fine with fans from southern Canada.

"It's raw and it's got a lot of energy to it," said Rob Baker, New Found Road's mandolin player. "It's like, a simple form of music."

The Essex-Kent Bluegrass Oldtime and Folk Music Association has presented more than 60 concerts of the simple form of upbeat music since they formed in 1988.

Committee chairperson David Blakney said it's easy for just about anybody to enjoy the "gutsy" sound.

Blakney, who also works on two bluegrass radio shows, one on Detroit's WDET and another on Windsor's CJAM, was so convinced that Essex County would take to New Found Road that after hearing them on the radio he called their agent.

Several times a year Blakney is courting bands this way, bringing acts from Virginia, Pennsylvania and Indiana to Kingsville, Woodslee and Lakeshore.

"Our reason for being is



New Found Road band members Rob Baker, left, Tim Shelton, centre, and Randy Barnes belt out a bluegrass tune for a capacity crowd gathered at St. John's Parish Hall in Woodslee Saturday. The Essex-Kent Bluegrass Oldtime and Folk Music Association will be bringing groups to the hall each month through the winter and spring.

to promote music," he said.

For every show, proceeds are forwarded to the Windsor Celiac Foundation. A few of the association's 100 members suffer from the disease that causes an inability in the body to absorb nutrients.

Blakney said it's a helpful way to contribute to a charity and also an effective way to advertise the shows.

The association will be bringing a new band to Essex County each month

until May, when they will be celebrating Worldwide Bluegrass Music Month at the Lakeside Park Pavilion in Kingsville.

For a group that started "on a shoestring budget," Blakney says they've been going strong ever since.

"I'm always surprised by the number of fans at every show," he said. "The last two years have been pretty good. With bluegrass, the quality of the performers surpasses most other per-

formers in music. It has probably stayed true to its roots more than any other music because fans won't tolerate it if they don't."

For Blakney, the style will always be one of music's "best kept secrets."

"It's niche music but if it does catch you - you're hooked," he said.

On Feb. 17, Virginia's Michelle Nixon & Drive will be playing at St. John's Parish Hall. For ticket information, call 519-776-8716.

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Maplewood Tiger Tales

Many activities are underway at Maplewood. Many classes are preparing speeches. They are working extremely hard to write material that entertains,

informs or persuades. All students in grades four through eight will write a speech that is three to five minutes long. One student from each class will be chosen to represent their classmates in our school wide competition. Maplewood's Oral Communication Festival will be held on Jan. 31. Speakers' families will be invited to listen to these speeches. The winner of the school competition will represent our school at the Greater Essex County District School Board.

Maplewood students recently participated in the CanSpell Spelling Bee. The spelling bee was sponsored by the Windsor Star. Much like the Oral Communication Festival, one student earned the right to compete in the spelling bee by proving themselves to be the top speller in their class. The participants in the 2007 spelling bee were: Kiley Kuharski, Abby McDermott, Caity Rovere, Sara Zaarour, Erik Oosterbaan, Carson Haynes, Erika Krutsch, Ashley

Kemeny, Lauren Ferriss and Brett Fairhurst. Great work! Maplewood is glad to congratulate grade 4 student Abby McDermott, this year's spelling champion! Abby will be representing Maplewood at the next level of competition. We would like to thank grade 7 teacher, Mr. Bondy for organizing this event.

He shoots! He scores! Spitfire fans from Maplewood will be gathering around the arena soon. Near the beginning of the school year, Maplewood Public School was chosen as a sponsor school for the Windsor Spitfires by Dr. Azad and Dr. Koutras from the Essex Walk-In Clinic. On Feb. 15, Maplewood will be part of a presentation at the Windsor arena where the Spitfires will play Sarnia. Management at the area has agreed to block off a section of the seats so our school community can enjoy the game together. More details will follow in the near future. A big thanks to Dr. Koutras and Dr. Azad for sponsoring our school!

On Thursday, Jan. 25, Maplewood staff and stu-

dents were treated to a concert by French singer Brienne. It was a concert they will never forget! Brienne came in and sang several of the students' favourite songs such as "Mon, Ma, Mes" and "The IR Blues". Many of the students had been practising these songs in French class and were able to join right in! Students were chosen to play games during the concert and were cheered on by their classmates. This concert helped generate a lot of interest in the French language and was a lot of fun at the same time! Everyone was dancing around and the concert brightened everyone's spirits. A big "Merci!" goes to Mr. Spagnuolo and Miss Reeb for organizing this great event.

All basketball team practices and games are well underway. Teams have already been working hard and are learning even more with each game they play. Look for updates in future issues. Go Tigers!

Contributions from Nicole Nantais, Vicki Van Gent, Amanda Desjardins and Grace Teskey

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Essex Classes begin Tuesday, March 7
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To register or to learn about our other course locations, call us 519-259-2407.

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The Naturalized Habitat Network of Essex County & Windsor

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