

The Real Thing

The Country Music Association is preserving a tradition

STORY BY CHARIS PATIRES

Traditional Country Music is nearly lost. Just ask John Farrell. Farrell has been playing traditional country music since 1968.

Music started out as a hobby for Farrell, something that used to generate income in the 70s. He was a drummer then, playing five to six nights a week. Today, he's traded in his drums for an electric bass. And even though he's had a 30-year-long successful career as a Realtor, and is the owner of John Farrell Real Estate, music is still an important part of his life. His focus now is on preserving country music and experiencing pure joy.

Farrell is currently president of the Genuine Country Music Association, a non-profit formed at the Lake in 2009 with a goal of keeping "the real thing" alive. The group was chartered after Farrell and some of his friends kept seeing traditional country music fade away.

"The Country Music Association and the Grand Ole Opry have lost their roots," he says.

So the idea was born to ban together to preserve country music. In the process, the group has also turned into an organization benefitting the community.

Each year in October, the GCMA hosts a Classic Country Jamboree for the Lake Ozark State Fair Community College. The money stays in the Lake area, helping local students with the expenses of earning a degree. The organization made \$16,000 at its event in 2014. Prior benefits have been held for St. Jude's Children's Hospital, Relay for Life, and the Wounded Warrior Project.

The band, The Board of Directors, meets once a month and plays at "The Barn" on Farrell's private property. It's open only to close friends and family, and members of the association. It's not open to the public, but that's easily fixed by becoming a member of the Genuine Country Music Association. Membership is open to everyone and dues are used to maintain the cost to operate the association.

"I don't know where I would go to play music and have as much fun as we do here," Farrell said.

Become a member

The Genuine Country Music Association membership fee is \$25 per person or \$40 per couple. Once a member the renewal fee is \$20 per individual and \$30 per couple. For more information, visit them online at www.gcmatherealthing.com.

