



SHAWN DOWD staff photographer

Ellendeer Berkowitz of Lima, a social worker at St. John's Home, and Joe Evangelista of Rochester, a client at the home, dance to the music of the St. John's Band as they rehearse at the senior home in Rochester.

Staffers and residents rock and roll at St. John's Home

In a sense, it sounds like something out of a TV show, an older version of *Glee*.

Four staffers at a nursing home form a band and start playing at parties in the home. Their music, rock and roll with the volume turned up, is a long way from Lawrence Welk, but it works, in part because it's familiar to a group that might be called the young old.

"A lot of our residents came up in the '50s and '60s," says Wildred Johnson, the bass guitarist for the band at St. John's Home in Rochester.

Johnson, 56, who works in protective services, is joined in The St.



GOOD NEWS

JIM MEMMOTT

Contact him at:
P.O. Box 274
Geneseo, NY 14454
(585) 278-8012

goodnews@DemocratandChronicle.com

John's Band by lead singer Andrea Spencer, 35, from human resources; lead guitarist Chuck Hebing, 39, from maintenance; and drummer Bob Mackey, 35, a staffing coordinator.

The all-volunteer group was practicing the other day, Spencer doing a mean Melissa Etheridge on

"Come to My Window."

A resident of Palmyra, Wayne County, she's been singing since she was little. In addition to performing with the St. John's Band, she sings at weddings. She's also sung the National Anthem at an Amerks game.

Singing at St. John's is special, though, she suggests, in part because of the audience reaction.

"The residents enjoy it," Spencer says. "They're bebopping in their chairs, smiles on their faces."

The musicians have smiles on their faces, as well, as they're doing

Memmott

FROM PAGE 1B

something they always loved to do.

Johnson played in the band at Monroe High School and then put down his guitar while in the Air Force for 22 years.

After returning to Rochester, he started playing for the services at his church, Greater Harmony Missionary Baptist.

Playing there and playing in the St. John's Band is not that different, he suggests. In each case, you open up your heart. "To be a musician, you've got to feel the song," he says.

Mackey, who grew up in Gates, has been drumming on and off since he was in elementary school.

And Hebing, the son of

On Good News

Jim Memmott looks back on recent hopeful news stories and passes along new stories of good deeds and good people. Write, call or e-mail him with your good news.

a musician, grew up playing and listening to music.

He also composes and has a recording studio in his home in Irondequoit.

The band's set list includes a song Hebing wrote last year. Called "Embrace Living" in honor of the residents of St. John's, the lyrics celebrate aging as a natural process.

"Walk with us and we will help you find the way," the band promises, putting its mission statement to music. □