

FFA looks to expand role in Villa Grove Ag Days

By Tony Hooker

The Villa Grove FFA chapter, under the direction of officers Emma Buesing, Will Jones, Luke Zimmerman, Logan Lillard, Addie Wilson, Kurt Zimmerman, is once again an active participant in Ag Days, and I caught up with sponsor Callie Parr to ask about her group's involvement.

How long has the current FFA chapter been in existence?

We are starting our 8th year this year.

How many students are currently in the chapter?

We had 32 members on the FFA roster last year.

How long have you been involved with ag days?

We started our first sweet corn booth in 2017. In 2019, we had our first corn eating contest. Last year took over the kiddie tractor pull as well.

This year we will again be hosting the corn eating contest and kiddie tractor pull as well as running our roasted sweet corn booth. This year's food booth will feature lemon shakeups, hotdogs, roasted sweet corn, and our produce stand.

Why do you think it's important for your kids to take part in Ag days?

Many reason...it puts the students in direct contact with the public, learning how to network, practicing customer service, and showing the public that we have some really great entrepreneurial young people who are dedicated and ambitious. It also allows us to make money, provide quality products for the public, and have a lot of fun in the process.



Photo courtesy of VG FFA

Sawyer Brothers look to get people up and moving at Ag Days

By Tony Hooker

For at least six decades, there's been a Sawyer Brothers band playing music in central Illinois. I recently caught up with Harold Sawyer to talk about the latest iteration of the Band, who will be rocking the Ag Days plaza stage on Friday night, August 5th.

How long have the Sawyer Brothers been playing music?

<laughs> We get asked that a lot, and there's really not a definitive answer. My younger brother and I started a band in 1975, which, after several de-

tours evolved into this band. The Sawyer Brothers band is called Sawyer Brothers band because there were five boys in my father's family, and they had a band. Shockingly, it was called the Sawyer Brothers Band. They're all either dead or retired, so we call this band Sawyer Brothers as a legacy to them, basically.

So, there's been a Sawyer Brothers Band putting out music for a long time?

That's exactly right. There's been some people named Sawyer putting music out for a very long time.

Do you play the same type of music as your father?

Well, some, believe it or not. A good song never goes out of style. We don't play anything new right now. There was a time when we did, and there are some songs that we learned when they were new and we're still playing them years later. Other songs have come and gone, but there's still some good ones hanging around that we're still playing.

What genre of music do you play?

I call our music American music. It's based around country music, pretty much. We play a mixture of country, country rock and rock and roll, which all came out of the same cotton field if you really want to go back far enough. At some places we play, we're the most rock and roll thing they've got, and other places we play think we're complete hicks. We play Hank Williams tunes every night, but we also play Lynyrd Skynrd, Stevie Ray Vaughn, ZZ Top and the Rolling Stones.

That sounds like a good mix.

I say we're more of a dance band. If you like to dance, we're a good band. We try to keep the tempos mixed up and try to keep it so people can dance. There is some variety that goes on, for sure. There are four of us in the band, but only two of us are brothers. My name is Harold and I play the drums. My brother John plays the guitar and pedal steel guitar and saws on a fiddle a little bit. Our bass player is Sonny Swisher, and his



Submitted photo.

dad and our dad used to play together years ago. Then we have a keyboard player named Gene Walden, we call him Mr. Whiskey even though he doesn't even drink. The first three of us live in Lerna, IL, and Mr. Whiskey is from Homer. You always have to have one import, it seems like.

And do you take turns on vocals?

We all sing and take turns on the vocals. I do a lot of it, which I suppose is kind of un-

usual since I'm the drummer, but in my case, it was a matter of necessity so that's what happened. I didn't want to be a drummer, I didn't want to be a singer, and I didn't want to be a band leader and I ended up being all three! <laughs>

Have you played in Villa Grove before?

We haven't played in Villa Grove for a number of years. We've played up around the Champaign area over the years, but as far as Villa Grove,

we have not.

I'm looking forward to hearing you. Like I said, my friend heard you at Mattoon Lake and said you put on a good show.

Well good, I'm glad somebody likes us, somewhere! There are a couple of people who have lake parties out there and there are a lot of people on boats who come up and listen to us and people tell me all the time that they could hear us across the lake, so I guess sound travels pretty good!

Have you put out any records?

We have four albums to our credit. They almost all have original material on them. The last one is all original stuff. We sell them ourselves or give them away. We play a mixture of cover tunes and originals, because if you play all originals, people start scratching their heads. A lot of people say they've never heard half the songs we play anyway, but that's what happens when you listen to the same radio stations over and over again.

What can people expect on Friday night, August 5th?

I hope a good time! We're a fun band and good to dance to. If they enjoy a good time, they'll like it.

These same four guys have been together for the better part of forty years. We're just old guys having fun, and we used to travel all over the place, but we don't go too far anymore. We're looking forward to it and I hope we have good weather. I hope we have a good crowd, because the more people we have, the more fun it is for everyone.



Committed to Agriculture..
Committed to Farmers...
Committed to You....



**LONGVIEW
BANK**

"We Belong Together"



"Creating Partnerships to Enhance Productivity"

Contact us for all of your Seed, Crop Protection and Crop Nutrition Needs

Tolono - 217-485-6000

Our goal in everything we do is to deliver excellent service and effective, efficient solutions to the farmers we serve.

www.unitedprairie.com