

‘The love of the music’

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WEST WINNIPEG

The Flatland Ceili Band has been a staple of Winnipeg’s Irish community for almost 20 years.

The band is composed of 12 members — including two vocalists — who play a variety of different instruments, including penny whistles, guitars, fiddles, bodhrans, concertinas, and more. It rehearses at the homes of different members and travels all over the city to perform regular concerts at care homes and assisted-living facilities, among other venues.

Many of the concerts are private, such as a recent performance at the Deer Lodge Centre.

The band is part of the Winnipeg chapter of the international Comhaltas Ceoltoiri Eireann — which translates as the Musicians’ Association of Ireland — a group which aims to promote Irish music and culture from anywhere in the world.

Alongside the band’s regular concerts, it performs in annual cultural festivals such as Folklorama and Irish Fest to keep the message strong and people dancing to classic tunes from different points of the country’s long history, even though only one member of the band is actually from Ireland.

“Lots of us have some Irish background,” said Dave Strang, musical director. “But some of us don’t have any, and it’s just the music that attracts them.”

The band prides itself off that sort of inclusive environment throughout the years it’s been active so far, Strang said.

“That’s what it’s all about,” said Strang. “It’s to try and connect with people. You know, there’s a variety of (ways) it goes over, depending on where we are. In the nursing homes, a lot of people have illnesses. But we can still see their reaction and smiles and tapping of their feet, and sometimes people singing along to the song.”

The Flatland band was founded in 2004 by Susan Hammer, a music teacher, who passed the position on to Strang when she left Winnipeg to live in Ireland full-time.

Since then, the group, mostly retired, have been representing the association on volunteered time.

The band’s schedule differs from year to year, Strang said.

“We’re not doing it for pay,” Strang said. “We’re just doing it for the love of the music.”

For more information on event booking and the band’s schedule, visit www.comhaltaswinnipeg.ca/music/the-ceili-band/ For more information on Comhaltas, visit comhaltas.ie



For almost 20 years, the Flatland Ceili band has been spreading the tradition of Irish music throughout the city of Winnipeg.

Supplied photo courtesy of Flatland Ceili Band