



Photo by Sarah Robertson

Joe Callahan and JOPéDO, a folk and blues trio play at Beaufort Pub last Saturday. The band has been playing together for a year and is made up of retired Loyalist College media teachers.

Retired Loyalist media teachers share their passion for music

By Sarah Robertson

JOPéDO!, interpreted means 'get drunk to the virtue of music.' This phrase perfectly describes the lads that make up the trio, Joe Callahan and JOPéDO.

"Pete (Snell), Doug (Wicken) and I were rehearsing and we wanted to come up with what we were going to call ourselves. Doug was suggesting we call ourselves the Joe Callahan trio and I said 'no, I don't really like that because that relegates you guys to sort of a side man roll,'" said Callahan, singer/songwriter of the group.

"I wanted us to be creative together and I wanted us to be equal contributors to this creative process when we're performing."

At one of the band's rehearsals it was Snell's wife, Carol, who was in the background listening to the men discuss what they were going to call themselves. In the middle of a song, she said, JOPéDO!

"JO for Joe, Pé for Peter and DO for Doug, but it has to have the hard é. Pedo is another word in Spanish which means fart!" they laughed.

The folk/blues band was formed a year ago while the

three were working as media teachers at Loyalist College.

"Now I'm retired from the school. As they say, that gig is over," said Snell.

"I'm taking a course at the University of Saskatchewan in English a second language. I've got some walking projects going. I'm going to walk 900 kilometers this April in Spain. And I've got some writing stuff that I'm engaged in now. I'm learning languages like crazy," said Snell, the band's multi-musician.

Individually, the trio has been involved with music since they were young.

"I think I was born singing! My first conscious memory of singing was in the church choir and in school," said Callahan.

"We had a music teacher and he taught scales, choir and harmony. I've just always loved singing. I love the feeling of singing," he added.

"I started playing the saxophone in high school. I wanted an easy credit and I got hooked on it right away. I've been playing the double bass for 51 years," said Wicken.

The band covers old classics as well as performs

songs written by Callahan.

The trio is very passionate about music. They not only enjoy performing, but they enjoy sharing their music with people.

For Callahan, it's about sharing an emotional encounter through music.

"I had the aha moment when I was at a conference. I used to work in the native community for three years and we had Mohawk dancers performing their cultural dance at this conference," said Callahan.

"Their leader came out and said we aren't performing for you tonight and there was like a hush in the room... like oh, why? What happened? It was really powerful. And then the pregnant pause was let go and he said what we're doing is we're sharing with you tonight. Sharing our culture and who we are. And I thought, 'Oh man! That's what it is!' And that kind of enabled me to feel more comfortable in performance mode. Call it a performance if you like, but for me, it's me sharing a song with you and what that song means to me. It took me a long time to get to that place," explained Callahan.

The gang is preparing for their next show on March 7 at the Thomasburg Hall in Tweed.

Singing helps soothe the soul

Loyalist Community Choir performs at open houses and city events

By Sarah Robertson

The Loyalist Community Choir sings happy tunes despite the loss in numbers over the last few months.

The Loyalist Community Choir, which was started in January 2012, has had low numbers this year with people getting busier with schoolwork and it's been hard to keep members' attention.

Pam Fairbank is the faculty advisor for the choir.

"I'm the unofficial manager," Fairbank joked.

"Since we've started, we've easily had 100 people come and go. It's hard when people are also in classes. But we've got a good core of people who are either faculty, staff or alumni that can make open houses and stuff like that."

"I think it's losing members because it is not competitive like sports. You just kind of show up and get to sing."

"The problem is it does involve a lot of teamwork, so people being there does matter a lot. However with school schedules, work and/or other team involvement, finding time for the choir can be tough. I know that firsthand because I had trouble making it to practices because of my work schedule," said new member Ashley Clark.

"People have to want to sing and be involved and it's lack of interest from the college that we're struggling with. Perhaps if more people knew about it, there would be more interest," continued Clark.

Although it's been difficult to keep members, the choir has been very successful with their concerts since the



Photo by Sarah Robertson

Keri Kirby directs the Loyalist Community Choir at their weekly Wednesday practices. The choir is preparing for graduation.

beginning of the school year. They've performed at school open houses and at events in downtown Belleville.

They've also performed at the president's Christmas reception and had fun performing in a flash mob before Christmas.

In December, 2014, Fairbank sent a request to the student government ask-

ing for funds to cover the expense of the choir director.

The request was denied, which now leaves the group to try to fundraise.

"I'm trying to get us through to graduation so we can perform ... which we've done a couple of times," Fairbank said.

"I think it's nice and I think it sort

of makes a difference. And it's nice for the kids who are actually graduating to perform too."

Fairbank is very passionate about the choir. She said it's a great way to re-energize yourself.

"It's a major stress reliever and I don't think students realize that," she said.

Changes made for transgender prisoners

By Michele Weisz

The transgender Community in Ontario has won another small battle for equality and human rights.

On Jan. 26, Ontario's minister of community safety and correctional services, Yasir Naqvi, made an announcement in Toronto regarding a new policy for how transgender prisoners will be housed in Ontario. The policy states that Ontario prisoners will now be housed based on how they self-identify rather than by their sexual characteristics.

Bryonie Baxter, executive director for the Elizabeth Fry Society in Ottawa said she believes that this "innovative policy" is a positive step for trans prisoners and for human rights in Ontario. "It sends a signal that in Ontario we take human rights abuses against transgendered people seriously," she said.

Changes include integrating trans prisoners into the general population. Trans prisoners will be referred to by the gender pronoun of their choice. (A trans woman will no longer be identified as "he" or "him.") Trans prisoners will be allowed to keep prosthetic devices which they feel is necessary in properly expressing themselves. The prisoners will have the right to choose whether frisk searches are conducted by a male or female guard.

Naqvi said at the press conference that he believes that the policy is "the most comprehensive policy in Canada for respecting the human rights-related needs of trans individuals in correctional institutions."

The policy is currently the only one of its kind in Canada. It affects prisoners of provincial correctional institutions serving two years or less. "No other jurisdiction in Canada has such a policy. In fact, one of the things that I'll be doing is sending a copy of our policy to all other my colleagues across the country," Naqvi said.

Correctional Service Canada's policy is to house trans prisoners based on how they self-identify only after having undergone gender reassignment surgery. Its website explains that pre-operative male to female offenders will be held in men's institutions and pre-operative female to male offenders will be held in women's institutions.

Correctional Service Canada's website states that this condition may not even exist. "Where there are reasonable grounds to believe that such a condition exists, a referral by the institutional psychiatrist shall be made to a psychiatrist... if and when available, for an assessment and possible diagnosis of gender identity disorder."

This policy will go into effect in March 2015. Also in March a comprehensive training program for correctional staff on how to deal with these new procedures begins.

The policy follows an amendment made to the Ontario Human Rights Code. The code previously stated that all Ontarians have the right to be free from discrimination and harassment because of sexual orientation. In 2012, Bill 33 (also called Toby's Bill) was passed to include the terms 'Gender Identity' or 'Gender Expression'.

Baxter said that she has seen "all manner of human rights abuses" for trans prisoners. Baxter tells of one trans woman who was held overnight in a cell with two male sex-offenders. The woman was "greatly at risk," not to mention the impact on her "psychological health as well as her safety," Baxter said. The Elizabeth Fry Society lodged a complaint with the ministry and to the press.

There are numerous stories of abuse and humiliation of trans prisoners, but an unlikely person may have had a hand in causing a policy change. She is not from Ontario. She is not even Canadian.

In 2014 a UK comedienne travelling home was detained at Pearson International Airport in Toronto. She was held at a correctional facility for 20 hours because of an expired visa. Avery Edison was held at Milton's Maplehurst Correctional Complex for men. Her passport stated that she was a woman. After her release, Edison lodged a complaint with the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario. It was Edison's experience that caused a flurry of media attention both here and abroad.

Baxter said she praises the current minister of community safety and correctional services' decision. "This minister has certainly taken steps... He has done more than the ministers before him. I applaud his integrity," she said. She also said she believes that trans people have a long way to go before they are truly accepted by society.

Stacey Jennifer Love is co-ordinator for TRANSforum, a Quinte support group. She is a Pride Belleville committee member. Love, a trans woman, agreed with Baxter, but also believes society's perceptions have come a long way from when she was growing up in the early 1970s.

Love tells of a time when she was 14. She was arrested and detained just for wearing a dress. She said she was subsequently beaten by the police. She was eventually let go without being charged.

"That's how the attitudes have changed," Love said. She believes that the policy is a positive step to how all trans people, prisoners or not, are viewed and treated. "From where it's come since I was a kid to where it is now, if it just keeps going this way, I'll be happy," she said.