

CCDCB are 2013 South Dakota Country Music Hall of Fame inductees

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The Clay Creek Deaf Cowboy Band knows how to celebrate in a big way.

As its 35th anniversary was approaching this fall, and as the South Dakota Country Music Hall of Fame was preparing to celebrate its 10th anniversary, the band happened to be nominated for hall of fame induction.

The band's members – Kirk Sorensen, Rick Martz, Skip Johnson, Lee Schaffer, Chad Peterson, Dawn Nelson, and Tom Zoss – discovered on Sept. 1, while attending the organization's award ceremonies on the Dakotaland Stage at the South Dakota State Fair, that their band was a 2013 inductee.

It was something new for the fair to have the ceremony and for the hall of fame to be at the fair.

Peers, family members or friends nominate inductees to the hall of fame. The board of directors keeps the identity of each nominator secret until the induction ceremony.

At the ceremony, the nominator of each inductee is revealed, and that person presents the inductee with a plaque.

South Dakota Country Music Hall of Fame members are made up of individuals who actively promote country music. Anyone who has lived or currently is living in South Dakota or ever has entertained in the state is eligible.

Inductees can be more than just musicians; they typically are active in mentoring or promoting country music. This can include not only band members and individual musicians, but also music teachers, DJs, and people involved in karaoke promotion.

The South Dakota Country Music Hall of Fame started as a brainstorm in 2003 from Kenny and Jeanette Powell and Barb Alley to honor Kenny's uncle, Curt Powell, who was an accomplished musician. Curt passed away after a courageous battle with cancer.

The first meeting began as a musicians' jam session in 2003 and became an actual awards program in 2004. The hall of fame awards ceremony and the gathering of country musicians from across South Dakota has become an annual event.

In 2009, Wini Iverson took over as the organization's chairman, submitted the paperwork to register the organization, help create its trademark, and continues to promote the organization statewide.

"We are very active with promoting our musicians at jam sessions and other events around the state. All of our work is done by the board and musicians on a volunteer basis," she said. "All of our supporters and businesses that donate to our events are greatly appreciated. The greatest donation is the venues who help host our events."

The hall of fame organization's activities include charity work to promote music for the state's school-age children. It has donated money from fundraisers to several elementary schools across the state. In addition, it has held food drives for several state food pantries.

About the Clay Creek Deaf Cowboy Band
Thirty-five years ago, two young men met while hunting, and discovered they both liked to play guitar.

What they didn't know was that "discovery" would lead to the creation of a band that has gone on strong now for over three decades.

Shortly after Kirk Sorensen and Rick Martz learned they both enjoyed playing guitar, they created the Clay Creek Deaf Cowboy Band.

Practice and jam sessions ensued and before long the band had its first paying show at the Eagle's Club in Vermillion. With Sorensen on bass guitar and vocals, Martz on lead guitar and vocals, and a borrowed drummer they were on their way. Shortly thereafter Sorensen enlisted veteran drummer Skip Johnson to keep them steady as they were honing



Members of the Clay Creek Deaf Cowboy Band are Tom Zoss, Dawn Nelson, Kirk (Sorney) Sorensen, Chad Peterson, Skip Johnson, and Rick Martz. Not pictured is Lee Schaffer.

(Submitted photo)

their craft.

It wasn't long before the roadhouses, bars and communities of the surrounding areas were calling them to play. The early days found the three on the road nearly every weekend playing small towns in southeast South Dakota, northeast Nebraska and northwest Iowa. The band has played hundreds of wedding and anniversary dances, rodeo and firemen's dances, birthday parties, graduations, community celebrations and even one "stop and think it over" party when the wedding had been called off. Many of the honky tonks and roadhouses that were once the mainstay of their performances have closed. In their place has come the clubs that hold regular weekend dances.

Working as a team has kept the band solid for all these years. It's always been a group effort. These self-taught musicians keep in touch with the pulse of country music and with three vocalists, the band is able to cover many country artists – both classic and current.

The band has played many benefits over the years for various causes ranging from people who needed medial assistance, families of the terminally ill, to natural disaster fundraisers. They have donated all money raised from CD and t-shirt sales to charitable organizations. Donations went to help with Honor Flight – a group that flew WWII

veterans to the memorial in Washington DC. They even sponsored two middle school students from Hawaii who needed assistance affording a trip to a music festival in California.

The CCDCB has played for crowds from 25 to 2,500 enjoying new venues while valuing the established circuit. While they love seeing the new young faces getting into country they are blessed to see many of the same familiar faces at many of their dances.

In addition to Sorensen (1979-present), Martz (1979-present) and Johnson (1979-1989), other long time members of the band include Lee Schaffer (drums 1989-2001), Chad Peterson (rhythm guitar/vocals 1997-2010), Dawn Nelson (rhythm guitar/vocals 1999-present), and Tom Zoss (drums 2002-present).

The members of this band believe in the power of country music. They believe they are fortunate to be able to replicate the music that people want to hear. They are grateful to the people of the state of South Dakota for allowing them to do what they love to do – play country music.

Band member biographies

Kirk (Sorney) Sorensen, from Vermillion, got his first bass guitar when he was 15. He played by ear. He bought his beloved '63 Fender Precision for \$100 from a fellow college

student who needed cash. He didn't play much until he met Rick. Between an old "How to play Bass Guitar" book and Rick, Sorn learned the basics. KXRB and WNAX were musical influences while he was growing up. Waylon Jennings made Sorney want to play in a band. Johnny Cash, Creedence, Cream and Chicago were favorite artists. Sorn admired local musicians Johnny Harnois and Arnie Mockler while growing up. "There have been too many to pick one out," he said when asked about a career highlight or favorite event.

Rick Martz, from Wakonda (formerly from Centerville), picked up his first guitar when he was 9 years old, learning what his sister, Jenny, had picked up in her school lessons. His interest waned until he was in the sixth grade and met his Uncle Ray at a family reunion. They played all weekend. In 1972, when Rick was in eighth grade, Ray came to live with Rick's family. He continued teaching Rick and that's when Rick knew he wanted to play and sing. Uncle Ray was Rick's biggest influence.

Another influence was Rick's dad, Frank, who made Rick practice guitar for an equal amount of time as he rode his mini-bike. Rick's musical style was shaped by listening to Waylon Jennings, George Strait, Johnny Cash, and The Eagles. His most treasured memory was June 26, 2004, when the band played at a "Welcome

Home" ceremony for the troops coming home from Iraq. He had two sons serving there at the same time. Rick thinks the secret to holding a band together for over 30 years is "having fun."


Skip Johnson, Vermillion, was the original drummer for the band. He started playing rock and roll in 1963. He learned to play by putting 45s on the record player and playing along. He had played with different area bands so was able to provide the experience that the young band needed. He played big band, country, and rock and roll. In the late '60s, he, his dad and his brother started a family band called the Triads. In the mid '70s, he played with a country band in Sioux City. In 1979 he joined the Clay Creek Deaf Cowboy Band. He was with the band for 10 years from its inception until 1989.

Lee Schaefer, Elk Point, (formerly from Bridgewater), started playing drums in school in Isabel. He played with a couple of different bands in his early years, logging many miles in the great distances of western South Dakota. After college and moving to Vermillion, he played with a local band from Elk Point until he joined the Clay Creek Deaf Cowboy Band. He brought new life to the band and kept the band going. He was with the band for about 13 years from 1989 to 2002.

Chad Peterson joined the band in 1997 when Rick sustained an injury to his hand. Chad played rhythm guitar and provided vocals for about 13 years before retiring to spend time with his family on the weekends.

Dawn Nelson, Vermillion (formerly from Tulare and Chamberlain), was taken off the karaoke circuit and started with the band New Year's Eve 1999. In addition to singing, rhythm guitar, and adding harmonies, she handles the scheduling, promotion and bookkeeping duties. Her musical influences were listening to her mother

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national music museum

The NMM acquires the Rosario Mazzeo (Carmel, CA) and the Bill Maynard (Massapequa, NY) clarinet collections in 1996.

In 1999 the NMM adds the Joe and Joella Utley Collection (Spartanburg, SC) and establishes the Utley Institute for Brass Studies.

The NMM receives the Alan Bates Harmonica Collection and Archives (Wilmington, DE) in 2000, which is second in size and importance only to the Harmonika Museum in Trossingen, Germany.

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7:30 - VHS HOLIDAY CONCERT

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 10TH
7:00 - 7TH & 8TH GRADE WINTER CONCERT

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 12TH
7:00 - 6TH GRADE WINTER CONCERT

MONDAY, DECEMBER 16TH
7:00 - 5TH GRADE CONCERT



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