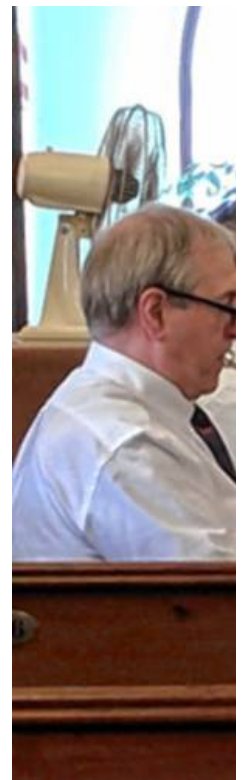


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Winchendon Winds returns for summer series



Winchendon Winds performs its Veterans Tribute Concert last fall in the host church, UU Church of Windhendon. Contributed photo The trumpet section of Wi



By [GREG VINE \(/byline?byline=By GREG VINE\)](#)

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WINCHENDON — After a two-year hiatus, the Winchendon Winds Professional Concert Band is returning for its 2022 summer concert series. For the first time since its inception, the series is being sponsored in part by both the Athol and Phillipston cultural councils.

According to executive director Jill Nicholson Sackett, “Winchendon Winds was the brainchild of my father, John Nicholson, who was a lifelong music educator and musician. He live in Winchendon for quite a few years, and in his 85th year he decided to found Winchendon Winds. That was in 2016. His vision was, if you build it, they will come.

“He wanted to build the highest-quality performing concert band in the region that his budget and operating model could support. Unfortunately, he passed away the year he founded it. So, his daughters, Inanna Arthen and myself, decided to keep it running and fulfill his vision.”

Sackett said members of the band come from far and wide.

“We draw hand-picked musicians from all over New England, including western Mass and the Athol area,” she said. “And we draw audiences from all around the greater Winchendon area.”

Winchendon Winds is a 501c3 non-profit organization that is supported entirely through donations, grants and fundraising efforts.

“We do not charge for our concerts,” added Sackett. “Part of our vision is that we want to be accessible to all and have no one feel they can’t come through the door. So, we do not charge for admission. So, that requires us to do a lot of fundraising.

“We’re very fortunate to be supported by a number of local cultural councils, and we were particularly pleased this year that the Athol Cultural Council, for the first time ever, supported us. We’re also being supported by the Phillipston Cultural Council. This is also the first year ever they have supported us.”

As with most everything, the past two years have been bumpy for Winchendon Winds due to the COVID pandemic.

“COVID has been tough for everybody for many reasons,” said Sackett. “We ended up canceling our 2020 performing season. And then our 2021 season, we fit in a late season in the late fall.

“We typically like to perform in the spring-summer time frame. We perform seasonally — we are not a year-round group. So, this year, with the situation being what it is, we felt we could try to go back and reset for the spring-summer time frame.

“So, for those of us doing all the administrative work, it feels like we just finished the season because our last concert was mid-November last year. We pretty much turned right around and started planning for this year — hired the musicians, set all the dates, and so on.”

Sackett told the Athol Daily News that the biggest challenge for Winchendon Winds is “getting the level of talent that we want throughout the entire band for what we can afford to pay.

“We believe strongly in compensating our musicians. Over 95 percent of our operating budget goes to paying our musicians. So, much of the other work is done strictly by volunteers and through in-kind donations. So, really the challenge is drawing the talent here to Winchendon.

“If we were closer to greater Boston, for example, this would be a no-brainer, but we’re not. So, we are bringing players from greater Boston, upstate New Hampshire, Vermont, western Mass. They come from all over.”

All concerts take place at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Winchendon, 129 Central St.

Performances are held on Sunday at 2 p.m., with the exception of Saturday, June 18, when the Summer Solstice concert gets under way at 11 a.m.

Other scheduled concerts include: May 29, Veterans’ Tribute; June 5, Beauty; June 12, Opera and Other Stories; June 26, Around the World; and, July 3, Happy 4th!

“The Veterans’ Tribute is kind of a special deal,” said Sackett. “American Legion Post 193 is coming in. They’ve got a color guard presenting the colors. Veterans come in and we do a roll call and individually recognize every veteran present. We do a lot of patriotic music. And then the Ladies Auxiliary does a catered reception for everybody.”

Winchendon Winds is conducted by James Cheesebrough; Rick Anderson, assistant conductor.


Sponsors include the cultural councils of Ashburnham, Athol, Gardner, Phillipston, Royalston, Templeton and Winchendon, the Massachusetts Cultural Council, and the Robinson Broadhurst Foundation.

For more information, go to www.facebook.com/WinchendonWinds.

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