

# East River Mountain Town Community Band

About this wonderful community band:

Founder and conductor Mel Saunders started this community concert band for several reasons. Saunders himself had performed with several community bands including, the "Bedford, Virginia Volunteer Fireman's Band" in the late sixties, the "Concord College Silver Cornet Band" in 1977, and the Wytheville Community College Band" in the early 1990's. Saunders continued to see the benefits, history, and heritage of community bands during research for his master's thesis—"The History of the Town Band in Selected Regions of America, 1890-1942" – at Shenandoah Conservatory of Music in Winchester, Virginia. In addition, several local citizens expressed a desire to play their instruments again in a concert band setting.

The East River Mountain Town Band was founded in the fall of 1997. The first rehearsal included a small nucleus of 33 members; this year's band numbers 67 musicians. Area high schools and college students comprise about 20% of the ensemble, while adults make up the balance of the groups.

The musicians of this community concert band range in age from 15 to 85 and its members come from four area counties in the two Virginias-McDowell, Mercer, Raleigh, WV and Tazewell, VA.

Eleven charter members continue to perform with the band: Kim Bird on flute; Suzy Fry, Jennifer Luppold, and Holly Saunders on clarinet; Charlotte Basham on alto saxophone; Lee Puckett, Jr. and Dr. Larry Zingale on trumpet; Tim Probert on mellophone; Bob Rounion on trombone; Jerry Goodson on euphonium; and Roger Daniels on percussion. Daniels continues to be the band's ever popular and humorous narrator.

The band has also become somewhat of a "family affair" for several members. Families represented in the ERMTB with multiple members include: Suzy Fry and daughter Christa; Pastor David Hall, wife Priscilla, and daughter Sarah; David Kade and wife Julie; Ryland Musick and wife Stephanie; twin sisters Laurie Authur and Nancy Faris and father Tom Cox; Chris Copley and wife Loucinda; brothers Sam and Charlie Dobson; and conductor Mel Saunders and wife Holly.

The East River Mountain Town Community Band invites one and all to performances scheduled throughout the year.

For more information about this community band, call: (304) 952-1792. For dates when the community band will be performing at Pipestem Resort, including their Christmas concert, call (304) 466-1800.

