



Josh Reynolds

People talk during a previous Tenor Guitar Gathering.

Continued from Page 8

pandemic. They will be back for in-person concerts on June 3 and June 4, 2022, in Astoria, Balmer said.

Each musician brings something to the table, she added. Flick, for example, is the youngest of the group and has played at the festival since he was a teenager. Some of the festival's venues had to be changed because he couldn't jam inside of a bar.

Carthy is an Irish musician who is well-known for his talent. Helzer, who is also Irish, counts Carthy as one of her musical inspirations.

Now, they get to play together.

Lawlor has been playing on a large scale since he was a child and he has the kind of skills with the guitar that makes people take notice, Balmer said.

Each of them have quite impressive

resumes, many of which include lists of awards and recognitions and experience playing all over, including around the world, she added.

The motto of the Tenor Guitar Foundation, which hosts the annual event, is "fostering musicianship, four strings at a time," Balmer said.

The term tenor guitar covers a wide range of four-stringed instruments, she said.

Balmer found herself in the lead of the festival after its founder Mark Josephs died in 2016. Balmer loved the festival so much that even though she herself doesn't play an instrument (though her husband plays the tenor guitar), she wanted to keep it alive.

"I just would have hated to see it fade away," she said.

So she stepped up and took the lead.

Astoria is a place known to musicians of these kinds of instruments, Balmer said.

They come from all over the country to play at the festival. One year, the Astoria mayor even declared the city as the Unofficial Tenor Guitar Capital of the World. The foundation's goal? To make that official, Balmer said.

She would also love to see a tenor guitar museum at some point in the future.

Tenor guitars and their four-stringed relatives are so versatile, they should be celebrated, Balmer said. For example, a ukulele fits into the four-string category. That's a great introductory instrument that many people can pick up and learn, she said.

She talked fondly of each of the performers and about how much she genuinely loves their music. She and her husband often travel for months at a time in their RV. Along the way, they always listen to the CDs of the performers and fall more in love with the music.



Gerry Carthy is one of this year's performers.