For Mead, It's No Joke

The Jokers To Regroup And Perform At Mead Building Benefit March 16



This photo shows the 1980s lineup of The Jokers circa 1999. They are, from left, Bill Gooby, Kim Sawatzke, Mark Miller and Mark Hardy. This version of the long-running band will reunite March 16 for a **Mead Building restoration** project benefit concert. (Courtesy photo)

BY NATHAN JOHNSON

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Have you done the alligator dance lately?

If not, it's time to loosen up those joints and practice up.

Local music legends The Jokers are reuniting for the first time in roughly 10 years for "Shamrock 'n' Roll," and they plan to get you on the floor doing the alligator just like they used to do. The Saturday, March 16, event at the Excelsior Flour Mill in downtown Yankton will raise money for the Mead Building restoration project.

"It is a great cause, and we're excited to be helping out with it, said Mark Hardy, the drummer for the band. "At the same time, we'll be able to experience a little bit of nostalgia ourselves.

Kathie Gerstner of the Mead Building Committee approached The Jokers about reuniting for the

"She said they were raising money for a historical building, and they wanted a 'historical band' as she put it," Hardy said. 'We thought it made sense and jumped aboard."

In addition to music, the 7-10 p.m. event will feature Irish food, free green beer while supplies last, a live and silent auction, and even a Blarney Stone.

The Jokers reunion will include the four members of the band during its main run in the 1980s -Hardy, Bill Gooby, Mark Miller and Kim Sawatzke. Paul Lammers will be doing the sound for the event, and band members from other periods of The Jokers' existence are also expected to make guest appearances.

The Jokers were formed in the mid-1970s as The Deuces Wild. Several name and personnel changes later, they became The Jokers. When Sawatzke joined as the keyboardist in about 1980, the lineup stabilized until 1989, at which point Miller left Yankton for

Gooby also departed, but Hardy, Sawatzke and some new band members maintained The Jokers name until about 2000. At that point, a decision was made to leave behind The Jokers and take on a different name, The Go Figure

"It was hard to let The Jokers go, because the phone always rang," Hardy said. "We didn't have to do anything to promote ourselves. With Go Figure, we knew we'd have to start over. It was 'formerly The Jokers' for about three years before it caught on. It was scary, but we wanted to do some different things.

The Jokers spent much of the 1980s as a house band at The Chateau, The Quarry or the bowling alley. They also played a lot of wedding dances along the way.

"We still reminisce about how people would pack The Chateau or The Quarry or other venues during the '70s and '80s, night after

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Hoffman To Return To 'Celebrate Women'

Former "Survivor" contestant Holly Hoffman will be returning as the featured speaker at the *Press* & Dakotan's "Celebrate Women" event in April.

"Celebrate Women" will be held Thursday, April 18, at the Riverfront Event Center, with Hoffman's talk set for the Dakota Theatre

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