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Family-oriented concerts coming to Camarillo

By Michelle Knight knight@theacorn.com

Family fun is free. At least for music lovers it is.

The Camarillo Community Band will continue its tradition of giving free concert performances in Constitution Park in Camarillo, beginning July 5 at 7 p.m.

People of all ages are invited to bring blankets, lawn chairs and snack-pack filled ice coolers to the 22nd annual Summer Concert season, which is slated to run every Thursday evening in July.

At one point in each weekly performance, all children in the audience will be invited to grab a baton, come up to the stage and conduct the band.

It has been a love for music that's compelled clarinetist Dan Rhymes to perform with the group since its inception 22 years ago.

"It was such a good idea, we've maintained it," said Rhymes, who is also the band manager.

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The community band has grown to include more than 100 musicians who participate in some part of the summer series. More than half of the band members are Camarillo residents.

Rhymes, who is also director of several school bands, including Somis' Mesa Union School and St. Bonaventure High School in Ventura, said the musicians have fun playing and, sensing that, the audience has fun too.

Kirk Raymond founded the all-volunteer band in 1985 as a venue where former high school students could continue to play after graduation. He was band director at Rio Mesa High School at the time.

Raymond said he's not surprised the community band has thrived for this long because he patterned the program after one that has existed in the state's Central Valley for 80 years.

"I was pretty confident that it would continue," Raymond said, also

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crediting Rhymes' organizational skills and commitment to the band.

Raymond left the band in 1999, when family obligations demanded more of his time. Now a counselor at Rio Mesa, Raymond still attends park concerts with his wife and children.

Two of his children play instruments in Rio Mesa's band, and his oldest daughter plays the flute in her college band.

The Camarillo Community Band is scheduled to perform at 7 p.m. every Thursday in July at Constitution Park, located at the corner of Carmen Drive and Paseo Camarillo. Each week a different guest conductor is scheduled. +July 5, John Stava, band director for Adolfo Camarillo High School +July 12, Robert Delwarte, Cal State University Northridge, professor emeritus and 43-year veteran music teacher + July 19, Julie Judd, Moorpark middle school band director and an organizer of the Ventura County Middle School Honor Band +July 26, Samantha Blake, also an organizer of the county middle school honor band and an award-winning Moorpark middle school music instructor