

This is an excerpt of the message about Mike Kirley from our friends at the Tottenham Bluegrass Festival:

“The sounds of bluegrass are echoing from the heavens as it welcomes one of our Tottenham Bluegrass founding members. Our dear friend Mike Kirley was called home to join his friends in the Heavens above to form the best bluegrass band yet North of Hometown.

Michael Kirley brought so much light to many people not only through his bluegrass travels but to many children in our community. Mike wore many hats in his lifetime as an educator, musician, entertainer, band member, father, uncle, brother, and of course a loyal husband.

Many of us knew Mike for his love of music and watched him entertain at many Bluegrass Festivals across Ontario with Hometown Bluegrass, North of Nine, and Switchback Road.

But music was not his only passion in life, His Family was his number one passion. From Sunday afternoon family gatherings to performing on stage, his times playing music with his boys, his brother, sisters, and extended family are memories that Mike, his family, and friends cherish. He was so proud of his kids; you could see the sparkle in his eyes when he spoke of them and their growing families.

Jan was the love of his life, whenever you saw them together, they were smiling, and their smile was infectious. You could feel the love they had for each other and see how they supported each other no matter where or what they were doing. From Quilt making to music to holding hands, showed their love and support for each other which was evident to all of us

... (Mike lived by) advice that he always remembered “It's not the notes you play but the note you leave out that makes it a great bluegrass song”

Mike Kirley's song of life will not only be remembered for not the notes that he left behind but for his endless passion to spread the joy of music, the joy of community, the joy of family, his smile, and the way he could make one feel welcome and ensure they knew their contributions made a difference in everyone around them.

Mike, you made a difference in everyone's life that you touch, and on behalf of all of I want to thank you for doing just that.

From standing in the rain to ensure the show goes on, to entertaining the children with your clown costume, to spreading the joy of music to young and old alike, you will live on in our hearts.

Mike's love to entertain and his love for children made him a great teacher not only in the classroom but around the campfire and at the festivals. Mike recognized that the Tottenham Bluegrass festival was a great outing for families and that starting a children's program was something the festival needed to incorporate. In the early days, Mike created a program for the kids and dressed

up as a clown and entertained the children not only with music but entertaining stories bringing smiles to the young and old.

He also recognized that our festival goers wanted to engage more with the entertainers and learn from them. And from that, he started the Tottenham Bluegrass Workshops, along with his pal, Al Benner,. The workshop continues today bringing together entertainers and festival attendees so they could share their knowledge and love of the music

As that is what Bluegrass is all about, THE JOY OF MUSIC. From jamming around a campfire to the door of the RV to the Monday night jams at Man of Yorke to the halls of the local Legions, senior homes spreading the magic of music was something Mike was passionate about. ...

Mike Kirley your contributions to Bluegrass and the growth of it in Ontario will never be forgotten. Your smile, your passion for music, and your joy of lending a hand to make things work will be memories we will cherish. May the music live on and may your notes never be forgotten.

Rest in Peace our Friend.”

Tottenham Bluegrass Festival