

'It'll make you feel welcome'

By Molly Linder and Olivia Shapiro on Wednesday, February 22, 2023

American Legion welcomes members, residents to weekly events





Carl Herring sings "God's Country" by Blake Shelton at karaoke night at the James T. Rayle American Legion Post 123 in Lexington. He likes to change the pace by singing recent country hits instead of songs from the 1980s and '90s. (Photo/Olivia Shapiro)

Carl Herring's grandfather served in World War II, and the Oglethorpe County resident — who is also part of the Sons of the American Legion — wants to continue being part of the veteran community because it's part of his history, too.

On Friday nights, Herring has joined in on karaoke night at the James T. Rayle American Legion Post 123 in Lexington to sing some of his favorites, such as "God's Country" by Blake Shelton.

"My grandparents came here," Herring said. "They used to bring me up here, so it always felt like home to me."

He said he comes because they've "got a lot of good people here" — and that's exactly what the Legion hopes will happen with members and other Oglethorpe County residents.

Debbie Furbish, the Junior Vice Commander of the Lexington American Legion, said there are 118 veterans among the membership. The different branches, such as the Sons of the American Legion, the Auxiliary unit, the American Legion Riders and the veterans make up what they call "the American Legion family."

"All of these events that we have gives the opportunity for Oglethorpe County to have a place to come and talk and visit friends and family and have some kind of recreational activity, whether that be dancing, whether that be singing, whether that be just sitting and having breakfast or having dinner, it gives that opportunity, which doesn't exist anywhere else," Furbish said. "What we do is something that just doesn't exist anywhere in Oglethorpe County other than at the Legion."

The American Legion had moved karaoke to the back of the building, but there was a drop in attendance.

Now that it's been moved into the bar area, manager Lauren Simmons said, "now more people are coming back," and although every week is different in terms of attendance, those who come typically sing 1980s and '90s country.

Simmons said along with karaoke, the Legion hosts several other events. They include line dancing classes on Wednesdays, Thursday steak nights, karaoke on Fridays and live music every other Saturday.

Sprinkled between these events, there are breakfasts at 9 a.m. on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month. These events are hosted with the intention of getting more of the community involved.

"When they come in here, you know, everybody will make you feel like family," Simmons said. "They'll talk to you and ask you, who you are, and where you from and who your family is, and it'll make you feel welcome."

Profits from booster members, sponsors and community members go to sponsoring scholarships, as well as giving aid to local veterans and their families, according to americanlegionpost123.net.

While the American Legion welcomes the public to join in weekly events, several hours every Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday are set aside for members.

According to legion.org, an individual is eligible to be a member if they have served "at least one day of active military duty since December 7, 1941 and were honorably discharged or you are still serving active military duty honorably."