

THE RECYCLES STORY
HISTORY FROM MAY 1979 TO MAY 2025
(this may be presented in part or in total as time allows)

THE RECYCLES ORCHESTRA began in May 1979 -----with a whimper, not with the envisioned , "BIG BAND SOUND". Present at the first meeting were, the Conductor, Paul Brenner, the future Concert Manager, Gordon Justice, who played clarinet, and -----a deaf violinist. The deaf violinist didn't last long and the group, most of whom had not played their instrument in years, grew , in twelve months, to 20. Presently , **THE RECYCLES** , a not-for-profit, senior citizen community band (we no longer have strings), numbers about 30, and plays concerts at nursing homes, elementary schools, seniors groups, and community gatherings. Over the years, we have even acquired some retired music directors, who, when they aren't playing with us, take turns conducting the band. We are not sure who, 46 years ago, named us The Recycles, but we are a group, from various occupations, who used to love playing our instruments. Now, in our retirement, we have the time to again pursue our first love. **WE ARE RECYCLED**. Recycling means keeping valuable things in circulation.

The famous **RECYCLES ORCHESTRA/BAND** began their 45th season, September , 2024 . Would you like to become a member? We ask that you be at least 55 and retired, and/or, with enough free time to make a commitment to weekly rehearsals on Mondays, from 10 A.M. To 12 noon, at Riverside Avenue Christian Church, 2841 Riverside Ave., and to our concerts which average one per week, September through June. If you play a traditional band instrument , come join us. No audition necessary.

***** What is the complete story?

THE RECYCLES ORCHESTRA was a brain-child of Shirley Hildebrandt, who in 1979 , was Manager of The Lake Shore Senior Adult Center. Her idea was to begin a senior citizen community orchestra , age 60 and over. She approached Florida Junior College (now FSCJ), who had a Life Long Learning Program for senior adults. Using Title I , government Program for the Elderly money, the college administered the orchestra, hired a conductor/teacher, Dr. Paul R. Brenner, and advertised the class for senior adults.

Dr. Brenner, a young ordained minister, and a founding member, and Director, of The Northeast Hospice Program, was a fine musician, and his energy, perseverance and humor, are given credit for the group's success. The first meeting/non-credit class took place in, The Lane-Wiley Senior Center . Energy, perseverance and much humor were necessary, because the sounds coming from the Recycled "musicians" were, they said, "laughable". By the time Dr. Brenner left Jacksonville, in 1984, to accept the position as hospice Director in another city, the orchestra had grown to 35, and the sounds were no longer "laughable".

On Friday, September 19, 1980, was a momentous day. On that day, The Recycles Orchestra began wearing , what they have made famous, "their traditional uniform". The men wore maroon jackets, black bow ties, dark slacks, white shirt and black shoes; for ladies, maroon vests, black bow ties, dark slacks, white blouses and black shoes. Obviously, we had arrived!!

In 1982, performed our 100th concert ; 1983, played for Gov. Bob Graham in the Capitol Rotunda, and it was reported that we were the only group of its kind in the United States.

In 1985 they began meeting on Mondays from 9am to 12pm at the Kent Campus Auditorium of Florida Community College of Jacksonville (the "big time"). FCCJ continued to sponsor The Recycles until the college lost Title I State Funding for Seniors in 1989; however, they continued to allow the group to use the Kent Campus Auditorium. Because of the loss of administrative sponsorship, THE RECYCLES ORCHESTRA became a Florida Not-For-Profit corporation, for the first time. By-Laws and Articles of Incorporation were adopted on October 15, 1989. At this time the membership age limit in the By-Laws were changed from 60 to 55.

In July of 1992, The Recycles were notified by FCCJ , that due to increased enrollment, they would no longer be able to assure us use of the auditorium for our practices. Gordon Justice, a Recycle member, and a member of Riverside Christian Church, volunteered the church, which we still use, as our rehearsal site. Gordon Simpkins, conductor at the time, requested that rehearsal be changed from 10am to 1pm , instead of 12:30pm to 3pm.

Mention must be made, that two of our members, both of whom were former members of The U.S. Air Force Band, have done many arrangements for us over the years. Thanks Tom Pomeroy,(deceased), and Roy McCance,(deceased).

In September 2010 retired band directors started joining the band and when they are not performing with the band, they take turns conducting. We call this system rotating conductors; each week a conductor will rehearse the group and do a concert. The rotating conductors at this time are Roy McCance, Jim Layton, Freddie McClain and Reginald Johnson.

After the concert season in May 2012, the band conductors decided that they wanted to take the Recycles Orchestra performance to more of a professional level and in order to do this we had to restructure the rehearsal and performance schedule for the 2012-13 concert season. The conductors (Roy McCance, Jim Layton, Freddie McClain, Reginald Johnson and Lew Cella) and band librarian, Carol Romine, had two meetings that summer and decided to purge the music folder of all the old music that had been played for years and introduce new literature. It was also decided that if we were going to change things like Performance Fundamentals,

Technical Preparation and Musical Effect, we had to start doing things differently. It was also decided that we would use the month of September to prepare for the upcoming concerts. We scheduled six rehearsals; two each week for three weeks and had what we called pre-performance rehearsals or an instrumental workshop. During this workshop, we sometimes divided the group into families (woodwind and brass/percussion). We worked on new literature and the problems related to that particular instrumental family and their performance. The outcome of these rehearsals was tremendous and totally changed the tonality of the Ensemble.

May 8, 2018, a new set of By-Laws was adopted, and in 2019 a Handbook/Operational Manual was introduced. During this restructure, The Recycles Orchestra changed from a "big band" with vocalists and a few strings(think Lawrence Welk) to a traditional concert band.

April 23, 2020, new By-Laws were amended, adopted and ratified at The General Membership Meeting of The Recycles Orchestra,Inc. , which officially changed the name of the group to The Recycles Community Band. Covid 19 virus pandemic hit us hard!!!! The Recycles Band had to discontinue meeting from March 15, 2020 to Feb. 7, 2022 (dates approximate). Riverside Christian Church would not let us practice there and no concert venue would invite us. The band officers kept us advised and functioning as an organization- not playing and performing, but doing the best they could under bad circumstances.

The following is a list of our succeeding conductors, since Dr. Brenner, and their approximate tenure:

- **Dr. James Christian Pfohl, the former director of Jacksonville Symphony orchestra, took the baton from Dr. Brenner, and conducted for about a year.**
- **Clyde Swatzell(1985-1989)**
- **Sam Rainey(months)-he was the first non-paid director, because FCCJ lost their Title I money.**

Those who follow are all volunteer, because we became not-for-profit in 1989:

- **Bill Heiss (Nov 1989-Apr 1991)he died unexpectedly**
- **Gordon Simpkins (Sept 1991-Aug 1996)**
- **Ted Christeas (Sept1996-June2004)deceased**

- **Roy McCance (Sept 2004- Feb 2022)deceased**
- **Dr. Edward A. Tarratus,Jr.,a former symphony conductor (months)deceased**
- **Lewis Cella (2009-2012)**
- **Freddy McClain,Jr. (2010- 2021)**
- **Jim Layton * (2010-)**
- **Jerry Carter*(2010-)**
- **Reginald Johnson(2012-2013)deceased**
- **Ralph Coleman*(2022-)**
- **Gene Moniot *(2023-).**

Presently, we have a rotation of conductors, consisting of Jim Layton, Jerry Carter, Ralph Coleman and Gene Moniot.

***indicates still playing with the Band when not conducting.**

Ernest Barnes-Historian 2025