

Glenview mom follows passion, joins rock band



Croozin' the Loop members (from left to right) Ken Horsey, Glenview resident Joanne McMahon, Al Engelmann and Tommy Frentzel perform during a concert on July 11 in Glenview's Navy Park. Rhonda Holcomb/22nd Century Media

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Glenview resident Joanne McMahon has always had a song in her soul. She began playing piano, by ear, when she was just 4-years-old and started taking lessons not long after.

She even continued studying piano during her college years at Marquette University, and grew to love singing as well, but always kept her musical passions private.

"In college, while doing the laundry, I would lock the door and sing away; I didn't want anyone else to hear me," McMahon said. "Music was personal; something just for myself."

McMahon graduated college, went on to law school, flourished in her career, married and raised two boys. Throughout it all, music was a constant in her life, but one she kept mostly to herself until her husband shook things up.

“Like many moms, I never thought about taking time out for myself,” McMahon said. “I put everything else and everyone before me. Then, my husband began dabbling in guitar lessons at the Old Town School of Folk Music and stumbled upon a class he felt would allow me to reconnect with my musical self. Without me knowing, he registered me for a class. I thought he was crazy, but apparently, he was on to something.”

Reluctantly, McMahon agreed and attended a Beatles ensemble class that her husband was sure she would love. Much to her own surprise, he was right, and her whole world began to change.

“From day one, I was energized. I absolutely loved the group dynamic. Feeding off of the energy from other musicians opened my eyes to a new way of looking at music,” McMahon said. “I thought back to all those years I attended my sons’ sporting events, thinking, ‘This is so similar to being on a sports team,’ everyone has their role and must work together with their teammates to win the game or make extraordinary music. I had always been so private about my music; collaborating with others was a profoundly different experience.”

McMahon was hooked, allowing her the opportunity to see a side of herself she never knew existed.

“As a lawyer and mother, I would always describe myself as very ‘Type A,’ very organized and always in control,” she said. “This new musical experience reminded me to let go and have fun. Music is so enjoyable for me, and helps all the other pieces of my life fit beautifully together.”

Soon, McMahon enrolled in a lyric writing class where students were instructed to write one song per week, sharing it with 11 other students for constructive feedback. The experience, while intimidating, taught her to put her ego aside and stay open to other’s perspectives.

“Yes, sharing my songs was scary at first and made me feel vulnerable, but we also had plenty of time for fun,” she said. “Sometimes we wrote goofy songs and I learned to laugh at myself.”

McMahon’s confidence soared and she then found herself agreeing to record a CD, which grew in popularity.

“When someone says they listen to my CD, or know all my songs, I find it truly remarkable,” she said. “Knowing my music positively impacts someone else’s day is an indescribable feeling.”

As life often does, one thing lead to another and McMahon found herself joining a few bands and playing around the Chicago area. Then, as luck would have it, she coincidentally sat next to a lyric writing cohort last year while on a flight to D.C. He mentioned he was in a band called Croozin The Loop and asked if she’d be willing to join. McMahon was skeptical, as the schedule was more rigorous than she was used to and would require travelling to the western suburbs, but she gave it a shot and the rest, as they say, is history.

“The guys in the band are amazing artists,” she said. “They’ve been together for a long time and are a well-oiled machine. I loved their genre — classic rock hits from the 1950s and

beyond. From day one, we worked so well together. My favorite is our ability to harmonize together and ad lib.

“We usually go into a gig with about 80 songs on our set list and then play a handful of requests. Sometimes we’ve never played the request before, but the guys are so tight that they can lead simply by telling me which key the song is written in.”

McMahon alternates lead vocals with three other members and is their lead keys player.

They perform about two or three gigs a month, and McMahon says that watching the crowd sing and dance to their songs is “magical.” She is grateful to her husband for having opened her eyes to a new possibility, and thankful she didn’t step away from the challenge.

“All I can say to others is to step outside of yourself,” she said. “We all get so comfortable doing the same thing and staying in our safe spot. My experience applies to all aspects of life — I am now more open to trying new things and embracing new experiences, and I’m a more fulfilled person for doing so.”

To learn more about McMahon and Croozin the Loop, visit www.croozintheloop.com or [facebook.com/CroozinTheLoopBand](https://www.facebook.com/CroozinTheLoopBand)).

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