



Greg Francia/Staff photographer

Dom DeLesio, right, plays the saxophone in the band "For Dancers Only" during the Senior Citizens Prom at Geneva High School on May 3.

Geneva students offer different 'senior prom'

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

Georgia Paladino, a member of St. Mary's of the Lake Parish in Watkins Glen, came to Geneva a commoner, but left a queen.

No, Paladino did not marry some exiled European monarch who had relocated to the Ontario County city. Instead, she was selected queen of the Fifth Annual Senior Citizens Prom at Geneva Senior High School, 101 Carter Road, on May 3.

The three-hour afternoon dance was hosted by both Geneva Senior High

School and its Catholic counterpart, DeSales High School, 90 Pulteney St., as well as the Geneva Housing Authority, according to Patty DeBolt, ball coordinator. The prom drew 175 senior citizens along with 25 student and faculty volunteers from both high schools, said DeBolt, the housing authority's home ownership coordinator.

The housing authority uses state and federal monies to provide public housing for people who are elderly, low- or moderate-income or who have disabilities, she noted.

Paladino's ticket number came up during the drawing to select the prom's king and queen. However, she almost didn't accept her crown, she recalled.

"I thought (the tickets) were for door prizes, and I thought that's what they were calling off," said Paladino, who attended the prom with her husband of 42 years, Jerry Paladino. The prom "king" was John Liberatore of Seneca Falls.

DeBolt said she got the idea for the prom six years ago. She had brought some seniors whom she had met through her work with the housing authority to a similar dance in Canandaigua. Since then, she has annually organized volunteers from the two Geneva high schools as well as numerous community sponsors to put on the dance.

For example, she said, a local business, Imperial Limousine, provided transportation for some of the seniors who attended the prom. Masonic Lodge 936 members served as tuxedoed escorts for women at the dance. Geneva General Hospital provided a van equipped for



Megan Doyle, a sophomore at Geneva DeSales High School, dances with Rodger Miller of Honeoye, during the Senior Citizens Prom May 3.

people with physical disabilities. And several local businesses and organizations placed ads in the dance's official program.

Admission to the dance was free, but seniors were encouraged to bring cans of nonperishable food. Four crates of such food were collected this year and donated to a local food pantry, she added.

DeBolt noted that one of her biggest goals as prom coordinator is to bring teenagers and senior citizens together in a way that makes each group feel good about the other. If the comments by both the seniors and students are any indication, she has more than succeeded.

"The young ladies are so nice," said Rodger Miller of Honeoye, who attended the prom with his wife of 55 years, Virginia. "If you tell them what to do when you're dancing, they know just what to do."

Stacey Kent, a 16-year-old DeSales sophomore, said she had performed the Charleston at the Senior Citizens Prom

two years ago with fellow eighth-graders from St. Francis/St. Stephen School. This year, she volunteered to serve cookies and punch, as well as dance with seniors.

"All of my friends were doing it, and I just wanted to help out the old people," she said.

Brandy Payne, a 17-year-old Geneva High junior, acknowledged that the sounds of Glenn Miller and Benny Goodman were not on her list of must-listen-to music. But she pointed out that she had a good time dancing to swing.

"It was their time we were dancing in, so it was kind of hard at first, but I had fun," Payne said.

DeBolt said it usually takes a little time for the teenagers to loosen up at the dance.

"It's funny to watch the kids when they first come in," she said. "But about an hour into the afternoon, it's hard to tell who's having more fun."

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