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After hours Many with day jobs are musicians by night

BY: BROOKE ENGEL Special to the CJN

Have you ever thought about what your dentist does when he's not extracting teeth? Or what your pharmacist is up to when she's not filling your prescription?

Recreational interests occupy the leisure time of many Americans. Some people play golf. Others play drums in their basements. And some have turned their hobbies into a source of additional income.

On any given day, you can find Dr. Andrew Berman, an oral surgeon, removing wisdom teeth and mouth tumors or performing reconstructive surgeries. By night, the Beachwood resident is often playing guitar in the rock 'n roll band Replay. "Oral surgery and playing music share a common link," says Berman, 53. "They both take a lot of discipline."

Replay is made up entirely of professionals who work day jobs and transform into rockers at night. They include a physician, two podiatrists, a lawyer, a financial planner, and a car salesman. The band has played at the House of Blues, Rick's Café, Blue Canyon, Legacy Village, Greenville Inn, Willoughby Brewing Company, private parties and weddings. "Venues like us because we help them do good business," says Berman.

Although Berman is not a fan of carting all the gear around, he wouldn't change a thing about his dual life. "Having both jobs makes each of them richer and keeps them both fresh," he explains.



David Wasserstrom plays guitar in three bands during his off-work hours.

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Looking at David Wasserstrom jamming on the guitar, one would never know that during the day he sits behind a desk as the president of Vantage Communications, a PR/marketing agency specializing in B2B, healthcare and financial services. Or that he serves on the board of the Cleveland Jewish News. But when he's not donning a suit and tie, Wasserstrom actively plays in, not one, but three bands.



Attorney Renee Heller plays the keyboard in the band Replay.

The 40-year-old resident of University Heights started reading music and playing piano at age 5. He discovered the guitar at age 10 and knew he had found his true musical passion. "Some things in life you choose," notes Wasserstrom. "Some things choose you. The guitar chose me."

The three bands he plays in regularly are ICON, a jazz band; Prime Directive, a jazz and blues band; and Allergic to Katz, a classic rock 'n roll band. All three, says Wasserstrom, have many Jewish players.

Wasserstrom isn't getting rich from his night gigs. He plays for four hours at a time and says he usually makes a "couple of bucks." Oh, and the free beer is a nice perk. "There's no measurable income," explains Wasserstrom. "I make enough to pay for gas to and from the gigs."

Even if he could, Wasserstrom wouldn't give up everything else in his life to perform. "I love music; it's my passion. But I also like my day job," he notes. "My business skills come in handy, because you need to be able to communicate, be organized, and be efficient with your time in order to succeed."

Renee Heller, 53, is another member of Replay. By day she is a private practice attorney, focusing primarily on domestic relations and bankruptcy. Once a month, Heller rocks out on stage behind the keyboard.



Jimmy Polster, far right, and Tim Hamman, far left, jam with members and guests of a wedding. The CruiseMasters was hired to play. The guy in the curly wig is the groom!

The Pepper Pike resident has been playing piano since she was a little girl. "All my friends knew that I had to

practice before I was allowed to come out and play," she says. Heller is a classically trained musician and has a bachelor's degree in music therapy.

Twenty years ago, Heller asked Jeff Robbins to bring his guitar to their daughters' Girl Scout meeting. Together they played and sang while the girls finished a project. "We had so much fun, we continued to get together once a week," remarks Heller. Eventually they started adding other musicians, and every Tuesday night people would drop by to jam with them and so the band was born.

Heller doesn't mind being the only woman in the band. "We've been together for so long and know each other pretty well that I don't even think about it," she says. "We've gone through wonderful and sad things together, from weddings and bar/bat mitzvahs to funerals," adds Heller.

Unlike Wasserstrom and Berman, Jimmy Polster, 56, doesn't have a passion for a specific instrument. "I'm not a great singer," says the Cleveland Heights resident. "I'm not a great musician. But I am a great entertainer."



Jimmy Polster, far right, whose day job is selling roofs, is the oldest surviving member of The CruiseMasters, a band that has been in existence for 25 years.

Polster learned his talent early in life. As a boy, he used to put on shows in his neighborhood. His desire to entertain led him to start an oldies rock band in high school, Papa's Bag. They played for one reason: to have a good time.

Polster, who sells roofing, says he's never held a typical day job. "This helps with playing in the band, because my hours are flexible." His band The CruiseMasters has been around for 25 years; he is the oldest surviving member. They play music from the '60s and '70s, and people from ages 8 to 80 sing along.

The CruiseMasters, which only plays covers of other bands' songs, loves to get the entire audience involved. There is no set play list, and there are no rules. "We just wing it," explains Polster. The band always travels with extra instruments and microphones and props like wigs, sunglasses, and plastic dolls. During any given song, you can usually find an audience member dancing with a doll or shaking a tambourine or maraca. "We let people have the run of the stage," says Polster. "At one gig, we got the Hell's Angels to do the hora."

For Polster, playing in the band is not about the money, although he does consider it a nice bonus. On average, the band earns between \$75-\$300 a gig; they play two to three times per month. "It's not a lot of gelt," admits Polster.



Rob Lash, left, owner of an 84-year-old family business, plays at Rick's Cafe. members of Last Call, above, include Bill Saltzman (drums); Mike Goldberg (guitar); Irit Slain (singer); Rob Lash (bass); and Keith Chelm (keyboard).

When Rob Lash was 8, he wanted to be a Beatle. He loved music and everything about the iconic British group n their music, attitude and humor. Lash, 52, started taking guitar lessons at 9, and although he loved it, he never wanted to join a band. "I was shy and found every reason in the world to not be in a band," explains Lash.

Lash is the owner of an 84-year-old, family-run dental laboratory business. At night, he plays guitar and bass and sings in the band Last Call. Along with four other Jewish musicians, they sing cover songs from the Beatles and the Rolling Stones to Fiona Apple and The Pretenders. "We are constantly learning new songs to keep it interesting," he explains.

Lash also applies his business skills to music. "My day job helps me to better negotiate with the clubs," says Lash. "I know what our time is worth." But playing in the band is not about the money, he adds. "My day job affords me a decent lifestyle."

Last Call plays gigs once a month, usually at Rick's Café in Chagrin Falls, Cowboy Food and Drink in Bainbridge, or at private parties. Last Call consists of two men in commercial real estate, a CFO of a law firm, and a teacher; the lead singer, Irit, is from Israel.

Juggling a full-time job with a full-time hobby definitely keeps these industrious rockers busy, but all say it's worth the effort.

So, the next time you visit your doctor or have someone install a new roof, just think: That night he or she may be rocking it out at a venue near you.

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