

Dancing is a family affair

Dancers will strut their award-winning stuff at Uffelman Estates October 14

By Tammy Dohner
Leaf-Chronicle

CLARKSVILLE, Tenn. — It's common for members of a team or organization to refer to each other as "family." The time spent together working towards a goal can lead to the type of familiarity one has with one's own kinfolk.

But when the Tennessee Toe Tappers say they are a "family" it's because they are — their dance roots are quite literally from the same

family tree. Locals can see the family in action when The Tennessee Toe Tappers appear at Uffelman Estates 2 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 14.

Brothers Wayne and Jeff Yates and sister Teresa Binkley are the elders of the group that includes two generations. Wayne is 50, Jeff is 49, and Teresa is their baby sister at 40. The remainder of the dance group is Jeff's children Shawna Taylor, age 29, Kayla Yates, age 17 and Justin Yates, age 15; Teresa's

TENNESSEE TOE TAPPERS

WHEN: 2 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 14
WHERE: Uffelman Estates, 215 Uffelman Drive
COST: Free
CALL: 931-645-7850

daughter Taylor Binkley, age 15, plus Shawna's husband Brandon Taylor, 30. As Wayne's wife Lisa Yates puts it, "Dancing is a blood thing."

The family may very
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The ladies, Taylor Binkley, Teresa Binkley and Kayla Yates, tap it out as the men, Jeff Yates, Justin Yates and Wayne Yates look on. THE LEAF-CHRONICLE/TAMMY DOHNER

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The men, Jeff Yates, Justin Yates and Jeff Yates take center stage while the ladies clap to the beat. THE LEAF-CHRONICLE/TAMMY DOHNER

Tappers

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well have been born dancing. Jeff Yates says, "We've been dancing since we were big enough to walk. We always went to square dances with family."

The grande dame of the dancing family, Katie Proctor, mother to Wayne, Jeff and Teresa, says, "The family had many a good time dancing in Fredonia."

After years of refining his footwork with the family at the Fredonia dances, Jeff joined the Dixieland Dancers team in 1980, which had him performing around the country and as nearby as Conway Twitty's Twitty City — the former country music entertainment complex in Hendersonville.

That, too, became a family endeavor, after Teresa was asked to join the Dixieland Dancers with her brother in 1987.

After several years with the Dixieland Dancers, Teresa says, "We lost some of our dancers, and in 2009, we (the family) got together as a team."

While dancing, the joyous sound of the shoes on the floor is matched by the looks of joy upon the dancers' faces. At



The taps on the floor make a joyous noise as the Toe Tappers team performs. THE LEAF-CHRONICLE/TAMMY DOHNER

times, the rhythms sound almost like a conversation amongst the dances.

Six members of the group performed in August at abcommunity arts event at Uffelman Estates. As they were dancing, friends in the audience could be heard shouting "Pick 'em up, put 'em down!" which brought bigger smiles to the dancers' faces and even more enthusiasm to their feet.

The action got so hot during a solo portion danced by 15-year-old Justin that Teresa bent down to fan her nephew's feet. That's some family love, encouragement, and entertainment.

Of the Tennessee Toe Tappers' many competitions, the National Championship in Smithville is the biggest.

Jeff, Wayne and Teresa agree it is an event of serious competition, which Jeff describes as

"The Daytona 500 of dance." Tennessee Toe Tappers have won the competition at Smithville twice — first in 2009, their first year as a competitive family dance team, and again in 2011.

In August, Tennessee Toe Tappers placed second in square dance at the Wilson County Fair. In total, they have placed in the top three in 17 competitions since forming as a group in 2009, with seven of those titles in first place.

While they most often perform at fairs and competitions, the Tennessee Toe Tappers sometimes get out to dance just for fun. They'll be dancing at Uffelman Estates 2 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 14. The format includes team performance and opportunities for audience members to dance with the Toe Tappers.