

By JORDAN KILTY

WADDINGTON- It all began because of basketball back in April 2008. Austin Scott and Alex Hammond would pass an acoustic guitar back and forth in the hallway at the Madrid-Waddington elementary school while their sisters had basketball practice in the gym.

After listeners began to throw money into the boys' open guitar case while they played music in the hallway, Scott and Hammond decided it was time to start taking music more seriously. The boys added a drummer, Jeffrey Mott and a bassist, Jacob Barney and began to book gigs wherever they could. Their band was formed and the rest is history.

They now call themselves the Acoustic Brothers and with forty gigs under their belt, this group of three 13 year olds and one 12 year old from Waddington have become quite the sensation in St. Lawrence County.

The band's set list mostly includes songs that are considered oldies by those who belong to Hammond, Scott, Barney and Mott's generation and the boys cite the Beatles as their biggest musical influence.

"Austin really likes the Beatles so when we formed the band, we just decided to stick with songs from the 1960's and 1970's. I guess we're aiming for an older crowd, I mean, we did play our first gig in an old folk's home," Barney said.

However, the band's appeal seems to transcend ages and generations.

"We do all kinds of gigs. We play in talent shows, we've played at homecoming and we do private shows like graduation parties," Hammond said, adding that the band booked 20 gigs over the course of the summer.

The boys have also played during the Dairy Queen Parade and at the Waddington bowling alley, the Rensselaer Falls Fire Department and the Madrid-Waddington elementary school.

They also took stage at the Hawkins Point Visitors Center on Saturday as part of the New York Power Authority's first annual North Country Crafters Extravaganza.

"The band is phenomenal, especially for their age. I never heard of them until today, but I think they are great," Ann Borsellino remarked after hearing the band play at Hawkins Point.

The Acoustic Brothers won the St. Lawrence Centre Mall's Sound Off- Music for Change benefit to support the Raquette Valley Habitat for Humanity in June and were invited back to play prior to the mall's annual fireworks celebration on July 3rd.

"The Acoustic Brothers were the winners of our contest and they did a great job in the competition. They won a \$100 GGP mall gift card, a \$100 gift card for Northern Music and Video and the opportunity to have one of their songs played on the radio by Stephens Media Group. They did a terrific job, they were very professional and they attracted a great crowd. We were pleased to invite them back to play on July 3rd," St. Lawrence Centre Mall Marketing Manager Tiffany Greene said.

Dressed in black suits and red ties and looking like a younger, smaller version of the Beatles, the Acoustic Brothers began their set at the St. Lawrence Centre with the song "Get Back" by the Beatles, then proceeded to play "Takin' Care of Business," "Day Tripper," "Wild Thing," "Let it Be," and "What I Like About You," followed by an instrumental version of "Hotel California." They attracted a large crowd made up of people of all ages, including their own parents and siblings.

"We call our parents our roadies. My dad kind of acts like our manager. Our parents help get us gigs and drive us to our shows. Without their support, we would have to walk everywhere," Hammond said.

"We are very proud of the boys' accomplishments and we are glad to help contribute to their achievements in whatever way we can," Brian Hammond, Alex Hammond's father, remarked.

In the future, the boys hope to write some songs of their own and eventually make a record. For more information about the band or to book a gig online, visit their website at <http://theacousticbrothers.webs.com>.