

Triple L to make debut at Pickin' on the Plains

By Sam Dieter

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Triple L, making its debut at at Pickin' on the Plains this year, has been playing much longer as a family.

Father Len Miller said they originally started playing simply to pass the time.

"We live on a ranch, and we always sat around pickin' just to entertain ourselves after the day's work was done," he said.

The band, from Portales, N.M., consists of mother and father Len and Amy Miller, and their sons, Lance, Landon and Levi.

Lance plays several instruments, he said, but focuses on

guitar. Landon plays banjo, while Levi plays guitar and mandolin. Len plays dobro, and Amy plays bass. She also occasionally sings for the band, as do all three of her sons.

Gradually, he said, friends suggested that they try playing as a band. They playing at Littlefield, Texas, 15 years ago. The band's name, he added, comes from a brand the boys used on horses and cattle.

"We showed up somewhere way back," Miller said, "and someone was like, 'What do you want to be called.' All we could think of was that brand."

He described his family's musicianship as traditional, and their vocals as having a southern gospel influence. The inspiration for their songs, he said, is anything that moves them.

"If it doesn't move you," he added, "it sure won't move an

audience when you play it."

Triple L has gone on to play nationwide.

Over the years, the sons have all made a name for themselves at bluegrass competitions, their dad said, and the band was named as the "New Artist of the Year" at the Front Porch Fellowship's National Quartet Convention in 2010.

They met Colby favorites the McLemores at a festival in Oklahoma. The two families saw each other several times, the last in 2007. Playing at Pickin' on the Plains, Miller said, "was just a good opportunity to catch up with them."

Triple L will be playing on Friday night from 8:20 to 9 p.m. They will also play twice on Saturday, in the afternoon from 12:40 to 1:25 p.m. and in the evening from 6:50 to 7:30 p.m.

McLemore band to play bluegrass festival once again

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The Pickin' on the Plains Bluegrass and Folk Festival has attracted many long-time acts over the years, perhaps none of them better known and loved here than the McLemores, a founding group for the festival.

The family has been playing as a group for 15 years, ever since sons Brandon and Blake took up instruments at the age of 10. Two years before that, McLemore parents Susan and Bob helped to start Pickin' on the Plains.

"It's just been really fun to watch them," Susan said.

She said she and her husband started playing long before they formed a band as a family. They got interested in bluegrass through friends in their 20s, and at that time helped form a band called Echo Creek.

A turnover in the members led to the beginnings of another group called Blue Horizon, with which they travelled to the Walnut Valley Festival in Winfield. That trip inspired them to start a festival in Colby 17 years ago, she said.

"We just enjoyed Winfield so much and we decided to come back here and have a festival," Susan said.

The family has travelled a lot during their time playing as a band.

"We've just met a lot of really nice people," McLemore said. "We got to travel around to a lot of places we wouldn't have otherwise."

Some of her favorite stops include Haigler and North Platte in Nebraska, Dighton, southeast of Colby, and Holly, Colo., which she said formed its own bluegrass festival after they came to play.

"They had a festival for their town anyway," she said, "and they just decided to add a bluegrass festival to it."

Pickin' on the Plains, she said, has benefited from "slow growth" over the years, adding more and better-known groups. Among these, the band Driven was formed in part by the McLemore sons. Due to the time they put into their band, they have played less and less with their parents, but the family still comes together in Colby every year.

They will be playing on Friday from 7:30 to 8:10 p.m., and again on Saturday evening from 6 to 6:40 p.m.



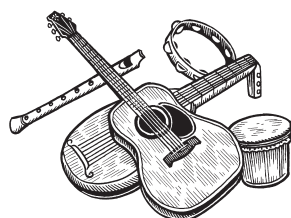
The McLemores (above) still perform as a family for their home festival, but twins Brandon and Blake (below) also play in a band they founded, Driven. Both bands will be playing in the Pickin' on the Plains Bluegrass Festival this weekend at the Thomas County Fairgrounds in Colby.



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