

HillCrest Tops Out

by Richard Regent

For over eight years **Dan Albrechtson** and **Rob Moore** have been playing jazz music on Wednesday nights. They played at the *Red Mill* for over 5 years and more recently at the *HillCrest Deli & Grille*, 2000 Davidson Road in Waukesha. Both respected musicians, Dan plays jazz keyboard, while Rob plays standup bass and does a few vocals. Besides musical entertainment, these two musicians have presented a Wednesday night venue for sit-in musicians. A place to play music just by sitting-in is scarce, so this unusual opportunity is appreciated by many musicians.

Jazz lovers in the audience, relaxing in chairs around tables on the main floor and on the balcony level, eat, chat and listen to improvised music. Efficient HillCrest Wait Staff scurry with hot tasty food and delicious drinks on trays, working their way past musicians who line the aisles playing their solos or waiting for their turn to play. On this special Wednesday night sit-in musicians stand because the HillCrest is packed with people.

The audience loves **Paul Vrakas**, clarinetist and former Mayor of Waukesha, who stands with his back to the bar taking his turn as a “sit-in” to play a few of his favorite tunes. Another frequent “sit-in” is **Joe Balestrieri**, saxophonist, always cheered by not only the audience but also particularly by Judy Becker, who says she is “his lady.” **Chuck Engberg** switches between his clarinet and saxophone, depending on the musical style. **Jim Gerard**, a multi-talented musician, is playing his alto sax. Another frequent musician is **Robert Lapaz** on the guitar. Robert was a former student of the late great guitarist Don Momblow. Since there is a set of house drums, it is convenient for drummers to sit-in without bringing in their own equipment. Eventually, **Cliff Gunderson**, **Jim Ryan** and **Don Porter** take their turn at the drums. Later in the evening, a young drummer, **Andy Bauer**, sits in. Andy started sitting in with Dan and Rob at the Red Mill when he was 15 years old. Presently Andy has been playing at the Jazz Estate on various nights, but will be a Junior at the *Berklee College of Music* in Boston this fall.

On June 30, 2004, the duo played their last Wednesday jazz jam at the HillCrest. However, Dan and Rob would like to continue the sit-in tradition. So they will test the audiences and acoustics by playing Wednesdays, July 7, 14, and 21, at *Neighbor's Bistro & Pub*, 260 W. Main Street, in Waukesha. This new location serves food and provides a bigger space for music. It is located between the *Fox Riverwalk Antique Mall* and the *Waukesha Civic Theatre*. **Sharon Schmidt**, jazz vocalist, will be joining them. The trio will entertain nonstop from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. and they hope you will stop in or sit-in.