



**Arlen Viecelli (right), co-founder of Salem Witchcraft, reunites with original keyboardist Kurt Schreitmueller, original drummer Moe O'Shaughnessy and the "new kid," Jon Ameal for benefit concerts. Photo courtesy of Salem Witchcraft**

each year. They work with young offenders, survivors of sex trafficking, immigrant children who have been separated from

the families during the Trump administration and more. In each facility, Ball said he sees similar themes: troubled young people,

surviving as best they can.

"They've got to sort out their lives. All of these children, their self-perception is so warped that it's really difficult for them to rebuild it," he said. "This process is fairly simple for them to do, but it's phenomenally effective in helping them rethink, reconsider and recalibrate who they are. It's transformative."

It may be simple, he added, but it's effective. He said he's been approached by psychiatrists and social workers after performances who have expressed amazement at the kind of breakthrough his week-

long program has achieved in the young people they work with.

"It doesn't sound like much—it's song writing. It's not a lot in and of itself," Ball said. "We're not the most important thing in their lives, but we're there at a critical time, doing a critical thing. We're proving complete, non-judgmental acceptance of who they are and even a celebration of who they are—sometimes, you have to celebrate surviving what they've gone

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# 'I GOTTA GIVE BACK'

## Salem Witchcraft reunites for show at Marquis Theater

The days of smoky bar rooms, regional concert venues and auditoriums may be mostly behind him now, but that suits Arlen Viecelli just fine.

The lead singer and founder of Salem Witchcraft has traded in his guitars and microphones and near-constant touring for a 60-acre farm outside of Ann Arbor – for the most part.

The group reunited recently for a successful charity concert Nov. 23 at the Marquis Theater in downtown Northville, raising money for the group Lost Voices, which transforms the lives of at-risk youth.

"I've been doing everything for charity for about 20 years," said Viecelli, now in his 70s. "I had so many people helping me throughout my career, so many angels standing over me I thought: 'I've gotta give back.' There are kids and families out there that are in the same boat that I was in."

Viecelli said he grew up singing and played in several bands while he was in high school. His big break came when he hooked up with

a couple of friends for a battle of the bands and, after winning, was approached to play his first playing gig: opening up for Kenny Rogers at Cobo Hall.

"I said 'Great.' I didn't know who Kenny Rogers was and I didn't know what Cobo Hall was. I was just a kid then, not even out of high school yet," he said. "When we got down there, I was looking around and I was just awestruck. That's what got me—like a hook in a mouth. It was a wonderful opportunity for me to see what music could do for me, coming out of nothing."

His family struggled during his early years and there were times, as a teen, that he didn't have a home—he slept in unlocked Volkswagens on a car lot. He played with several bands throughout the 1960s and hooked up with Moe O'Shaughnessy, a drummer, and Kurt Schreitmueller, a keyboardist, in Salem Witchcraft in the 1970s. They played extensively in the area, high schools, bars, places like The Token Lounge and the Studio Lounge and started to make a name for themselves.

"It was quite a ride. We went from nothing to five records. We had a five-man road crew and a full lightshow, a giant truck," he said. "We bought a house for the roadies to live in in Garden City. We had a two-and-a-half car garage to practice in; It was like a snowball rolling."

Along the way Salem Witchcraft opened for national acts: musicians like Aerosmith, Ted Nugent, REO Speedwagon, Bob Seger, Styx and Journey. They played together until 1979, then Viecelli toured on, doing USO shows around the world. Eventually, it got to be too much and he decided to settle down.

"Touring was burning me out. I had just had it," he said. "I'd been around the world a couple of times, playing in these bands—I was so lucky, but it wears on you. I needed a change."

He came out of semi-retirement in 2004, when he put together a Christmas CD for his family and friends. Somehow—he said he isn't exactly sure what happened—it found its way to the local radio stations and soon, Pam Rossi was playing it on her Over Easy show



on the weekends. Other stations followed.

One thing led to another and soon he, O'Shaughnessy and Schreitmueller were playing again as Salem Witchcraft, taking on a variety of causes to help those in need. The shows are a mix of their original songs as well as popular classics from the bands they toured with and, in between, stories about what the music meant at the time it was written and performed.

"I couldn't be happier," Viecelli said. "To be blessed enough to be able to sing and still hit notes that are required for the songs we're doing—I'm feeling really, really blessed."

*You can find more info about the band at [SalemWitchcraftBand.com](http://SalemWitchcraftBand.com).*