

When Steve “Spoonman” Tankersley isn’t recording music or organizing world record attempts for the largest spoon ensemble, he spends time with friends. One of those friends is Jerry Thompson, who Tankersley has adopted as an uncle.

Thompson is a resident at the Waters of Salem. Tankersley said he tries to get by once a week to pay him a visit.

On a recent visit, Tankersley thought about combining his heart for those folks in the nursing home with his music talent.

So that’s what he did, with the help of local musician Brian Brough.

Tankersley and Brough showed up at the Waters of Salem for a morning music session and more than 30 residents and staff filled the cafeteria to listen, dance and sing along.

“Spoonman” is never one to shy away from the crowd and even had one resident ask for his phone number.

“Spoonman” told stories about the influence Thompson had on his life growing up in rural Pekin.

“I am not related to Jerry, but I told him I am adopting him as my uncle,” Tankersley said.

Thompson worked as a chicken farmer and according to “Spoonman” was one of the best fast-pitch softball pitchers in the area.

Thompson just smiles as Tankersley tells how not many people could even hit the ball when the threw it.

One of the more touching moments during the visit came when “Spoonman” put down the eating utensils he was playing and picked up a guitar.

“I am not a singer or a guitar player and I am going to try to do both here,” he said.

Tankersley sang a touching song about how people don’t take the time to just say “Hello” anymore.

“I come here to visit all the time,” he said. “And you never see some of these folks with any visitors. We wanted to come and spend time with all them.”

Adding to the emotion was the fact that Mike McCoskey had passed away just a week or so prior to the visit.

“He was really looking forward to us coming and playing and I wish Mike could have been here,” Spoonman said.

The set ended with a rendition of a song about chickens where the crowd clucked along at certain points of the song.

The lead clucker was Doris McKindery.

The show went over so well, before Brough and “Spoonman” made their way out the door, they had already agreed to a return performance.

Until, “Spoonman” will resume his duties of trying to break Japan’s record for largest spoon ensemble.

The attempt will be Thursday, July 3, just before the Firework show in Pekin Park.

“Spoonman” said they will begin registering folks at noon. All who register will get a numbered wrist band and will have to walk through a turnstile to be counted during the attempt.

“When we break the record that night, notice I said when, not if, it will be perfect because the record will fall and then we will celebrate with fireworks!”