



CALIFORNIA BLUEGRASS ASSOCIATION

***From darkness
to light***

2021 ANNUAL REPORT

***challenges and
accomplishments***



Intro:

Welcome to the 2021 CBA Annual Report, which would have had little to chronicle if the CBA board and a host of super volunteers under the leadership of Pete Ludé had not stepped up big time and simply willed things to happen, pandemic be damned! Out of the black hole that was 2020, a series of online events slowly crawled forth month-after-month until in October 2021 the Fall Campout, held under a most auspicious full moon, marked our cautious return home.

2021 was a year of transition: with no live events to distract our energy we worked steadily to rebuild the association’s infrastructure and procedures, and to undertake initiatives which will serve us well as we close in on our 48th year and beyond. You might rightly suspect that “volunteer” is the most used word (other than “Bluegrass”) in this Report. That’s because virtually every CBA task and project is inspired, directed, and carried out by volunteers. Read on, and you will see the results. – Ed.



Chairman’s Report

It’s often helpful to step back from day-to-day activities and contemplate the bigger picture. That’s what this special year-end edition of the *Bluegrass Breakdown* is all about – our Annual Report on CBA’s challenges and accomplishments. What a year 2021 has been! We learned how to do more things online, but also how important human contact is, especially for playing the music we love.

Over the past year, CBA has successfully navigated the digital age by hosting three major webcast events: the Award-nominated Jam-a-Thon, an Online Music Camp, and the Turn Your Radio Online fundraiser. In addition, your CBA board and volunteer leaders are now all experts at Zoom meetings and Google docs, as we learned to work closely together even when we couldn’t be together physically.

While on hiatus from producing the enormous Father’s Day Festival, the volunteer team worked towards strengthening the CBA infrastructure. We established a permanent mailing address and phone number, entirely rebuilt and modernized the website, developed the Zenfolio photo archive, expanded our Social Media outreach, and will soon be going live with our new Membership Management platform. The Youth program is expanding online as well, with both the Online Youth Academy and new iPad children’s app “Bluegrass Campout”.

Perhaps most notably, CBA was successful in pursuing funding from COVID relief grants. Fundraising and Business Development Committee Chair Lani Way and our dedicated Treasurer Val Cornejo spent hundreds of volunteer hours preparing detailed filings to both Federal and State agencies, documenting CBA’s lost revenue from in-person events and calculating the extra expenses incurred. With these successful grants, we were able to restore our “rainy day” reserve fund as well as continue to support musicians and instructors through our various programs.

Looking toward next year, the CBA Board and Strategic Planning Committee have crafted a roadmap of new initiatives, all with the aim of supporting our founding charter: *To preserve and promote Bluegrass, Old-time, and gospel music*. Specifically, we emphasize finding ways to reach new fans that haven’t typically been engaged with CBA and creating programs that are sustainable over the long term – either by sales of tickets or registration or through sponsorship and grant funding. Significant thought has gone into this, and we’re excited about the new initiatives being readied to launch shortly.

Most importantly, we were finally able to (safely) get back together for in-person jamming and performances at the Fall Campout and our wonderful new South State 48 event. This just served as a reminder of how much we missed in-person events during the preceding 18 months and how much promise 2022 holds.

*Cover photo of the full moon over the Fall Campout 2021 Youth Concert – Patrick Campbell.
This section photo: Pete Ludé at Big Pines Mountain Music Festival 2021 – Robin Frenette*

President’s Report



As I reflect on the past couple of years, oddly my prevailing reaction is gratitude. While little about them is what we would have chosen, the cause for gratitude is real. Faced with navigating the unprecedented headwinds of a global pandemic, I watched our organization of fiercely passionate volunteers and dedicated members do far more than just weather the storm.

The CBA looked for new ways to deliver on our mission statement through virtual community and online events. What resulted was TYRO, Jam-a-Thon, an updated website, expanded social media presence, the Zenfolio photo collection, the most successful grant writing year in CBA history, and much more that you’ll read about in this issue.

I’m grateful that these technologies and tools have made participation much more accessible, which is a game changer for a state as large and spread out as California. Having grown up in the southern part of the state, it has been especially energizing for me to be able to collaborate more actively with our members and partner organizations in Southern California. You can read more about the inaugural South State 48 and some other south-state events later in this issue. Be sure to mark your calendar for the SS48 in 2022!

While we have made great strides in securing our future by expanding our audience outreach, supporting our youth, and integrating exciting virtual events, **I’m also profoundly grateful that the CBA’s history continues to ground us,**

keeping our mission of supporting music at the center of everything we do. Slowly returning to live events starting with the Fall Campout in Lodi has been a welcome relief. A big thank you to our regional directors who have been working hard to host and support local events. And of course, I’m most looking forward to June 2022 in Grass Valley!

As I reflect on all that has been overcome and accomplished in 2021, the thing that I am most grateful for is the CBA’s membership. Thank you for supporting your organization!

Photo: Theresa Gooding – Zenfolio archives

Regional Directors: Where the Rubber Meets the Road



Our Regional Directors worked hard under tough conditions in 2021. In SoCal, Danny Hootenanny Clark (Orange County Regional Director) led a crack team that included Regional Directors Donna Hargis (Huntington Beach), Frank Swatek (Long Beach), Rick Litiatco (LA West/Ventura), and Robert Wheeler (LA East/San Bernardino). With help from Mark Shutts, Joanne Ledesma, Deb Livermore, and many other volunteers.

These Regional Directors gave the world a brand new annual picking party called the South State 48. And they’re just getting started! **We are always in need of new Regional Directors.** The area around Grass Valley needs a new Director now that the fine fiddler and organizer Mei

Lin Heirendt has taken up a new role as CBA Youth Ambassador. Thanks for an exemplary tour of duty, Mei Lin!

In the Fresno area, the energetic and loud-shirted Stan Allen has hung up his Regional Director spurs after several years of service. Stan has helped build a lively Bluegrass community, including a thriving summer concert series that will be a key CBA asset for years to come, and we’re most grateful to him.

Banjo and guitar hotshot Christine Wilhoyte, after a great run as Regional Director for the North Sacramento Valley area, has up and moved to Nashville, and her boots will be hard to fill.

Other important regions that don’t currently have their own directors include Bakersfield, San Diego/Imperial Valley, and the far northern region around Humboldt County. If you’re in one of those areas and you have a hankering to meet people, help out your community, and do a whole lot of picking, drop me a line at tedkuster@californiabluegrass.net!

Written by Ted Kuster. Photo: Ted Kuster – Patrick Campbell

The California Bluegrass Association board of directors is delighted to send this 2021 Annual Report to all current and past members. In the Report you will see how the CBA has weathered the Covid pandemic and emerged stronger than ever. If you are not already a CBA member or you have let your membership lapse, we invite you to (re)join the CBA here:

californiabluegrass.org/cba-membership/

Your membership will help keep Bluegrass, Old-time, and traditional Gospel music alive and thriving, and you will become a member of the friendliest music organization in California.

The new Zenfolio photo collection

Over the years, the CBA has amassed a deep file of photos of events and gatherings from the lenses of official CBA photographers and just folks who sent in memories. Longtime CBA members may recall seeing some of them cycle randomly through the bottom right corner of the old website.



Several years ago, Mark Varner sent a batch of CDs to the Breakdown editor that contained yet another trove of photos. Between the two sources, CBA had a wonderful repository of the history of the CBA, but unfortunately, they were stored in the photographic equivalent of a shoe box – just sort of dumped in with minimal organization other than a general range of dates. Finding a photo of a particular event involved poking around through hundreds of images hoping to find a nugget.

Enter board member and CBA Photo Team member Robin Frenette. Robin has been the photographer of record for many music events in both Southern and Northern California and has come away with some pretty stunning images, including many of the photos in this Annual Report. She recommended to the board that the Photo Team upload the entire photo collection to Zenfolio, not only to organize it but also to make the thousands of images easily available to members and publicists. Needless to say, this was met with hearty approval!

You will discover records of California Bluegrass and Old-time events by the current Photo Team Patrick Campbell, Alan Bond, and

Robin as well as the many CBA photographers over the past 47 years. Use the search box to type in names, events, or years. Right click on any photo to download a copy. Very cool! cbaphotos.zenfolio.com.

Written by Editor
Photo: Robin Frenette – Patrick Campbell

The CBA lost some valuable volunteers and great friends this year:



Alex Cameron started volunteering in 2014. He would come to the Father’s Day Festival with his grandfather, Rich Evans, and work side-by-side with him and Tim Edes. He also generously assisted David Brace and anyone else, including myself, that needed help.

Alex’s jobs were numerous: distributing the radios that we communicate with, fueling the golf carts, pulling vehicles out of the mud, and answering the emergency radio, just to name a few.

And, oh yes, keeping our spirits high with laughter! Our festival is only as good as our Volunteers. He was awarded a Bill and Faye Downs Super Volunteer award by the CBA board in August 2021.

I would gladly present this award to him in person if I could...but unfortunately, Alex lost his life on August 9, 2020, in a motorcycle accident. It was tragic and unforeseen.

Written by Deb Livermore.
Photo: Alex with David Brace – Zenfolio archive



John Karsemeyer was one of my three-times-a-year Bluegrass friends. I can say that John enjoyed leading beginner jams and was a proponent of the Pete Wernick Method. I believe he may have taken Wernick’s jam class. Anyway, John was kind enough to run a jam at my behest at the Cloverdale Fiddle Festival 2015-17. It went over very well. He also was a stalwart member of the California Showcase judging panel. A real sweet man. Soft spoken and a very welcoming person.

Written by Mark Hogan. Photo of John at HopMonk jam in Sebastopol 2019.



Lynn Stanton Cornish, wife of Rick Cornish, an Honorary Lifetime Member and past Chairman of the CBA Board, passed away at their home in Jamestown, CA. Lynn was a gifted artist who painted portraits of dozens of CBA members’ pets, children, and grandchildren. Lynn also painted portraits of Bluegrass artists and donated them to the CBA for fundraising.

Written by Darby Brandli. Photo: Lynn – Zenfolio archives



Allison Varner, the widow of Mark Varner and the mother of Marty Varner and Veronica Varner died at her retirement home in Dangriga, Belize. She was 57 years old.

Allison was an enthusiastic lover and supporter of all kinds of music, from Bluegrass to opera, rock, and blues. She loved to dance to live music and attended many live performances in the Santa Cruz and San Lorenzo Valley area, as well as Bluegrass festivals throughout California.

She took pride in the success of her children, in music and in life. Marty recently completed his masters degree and now lives in Belize. Veronica lives in Los Angeles, where she is married and is pursuing graduate studies.



Mark Varner, the former editor of both the NCBS and CBA membership publications, died in his sleep on September 4, 2021, at his new retirement home in Belize. He was 64 years old.

The Everett, Washington native and longtime resident of Boulder Creek played mandolin and guitar with several active Bluegrass bands, including The Sibling Brothers. He performed frequently at the Good Old Fashioned Bluegrass Festival during its early years and at many other area Bluegrass festivals and concerts.

He served on the Northern California Bluegrass Society Board of Directors and helped organize the GOF Festival, the Santa Cruz Bluegrass Fair, and many other events. When he was named editor, he added the pdf online version of the Society’s monthly *Bluegrass by the Bay* magazine – the first Bluegrass publication of any kind ever to do so.

In addition to his role as editor of the CBA *Bluegrass Breakdown*, Mark served on the CBA board, was a member of the Talent Acquisition Group (which recruited the Father’s Day Festival stage acts), and organized the first printed program for the Festival.

Mark’s son, Marty, writes: *Mark Varner passed away in his sleep on September 4th. He was a loving father, husband, and friend. He will be missed by many and I, along with others, will always cherish the memories we have of him. His time in Belize was pleasant, and his last days were spent with his family. May you all cherish your loved ones while they are still here. With love, Marty Varner.*

Memories of Allison and Mark written by Michael Hal and Marty Varnerl. Photos – Zenfolio archive

Old-time Report

SoCal Old-time is Back with a Vengeance

Musical life has been on a roll this year over in my neck of the woods. 2021 has transformed into a musical “springtime” after what feels like a long and brutal musical “wintertime.” Pandemic be damned! I’ve been very fortunate to witness and actively contribute to many musical happenings throughout the year in a manageable and safe way.

Another bright ray of sunshine: I’ve never seen more people interested in learning fiddle and banjo. It’s absolutely wonderful to see this firsthand and have an opportunity to bring new blood of all ages into the tradition. Students are more thirsty than ever to learn the tunes and songs of Doc Watson, Tommy Jarrell, Joe Thompson, Skillet Lickers, Sarah Armstrong, Ernie Carpenter, etc. For Los Angeles this is a big deal. Several members of my UCLA ensemble are part of the prestigious Gluck Old-Time Ensemble, who perform and interact with underserved communities in Los Angeles (libraries, retirement communities, elementary schools) in the name of Old-time music. I’m quite proud to put this stringband together every year and see them back in action.

Community music is reemerging. Old-time jams have begun again throughout the greater Los Angeles area and I have recently started hosting jams and 78rpm listening parties at the Old-Time Tiki Parlour. The Santa Barbara Old-time Fiddlers’ Festival Campout took place in October. It was a huge success, with fiddle and banjo workshops as well as a beautiful CD release party/concert celebrating Skillet Licorice’s new album “Allsorts Orchestra”. Their album features many musicians from Berkeley and San Francisco like Suzy Thompson, Craig Ventresco, and Meredith Axelrod to name just a few. It is also a sonic collaboration with musicians from SoCal like Clinton Davis and Kelly Marie Martin. Next year will be the 50th Annual Santa Barbara Old-Time Fiddlers’ Festival, another huge and heavily anticipated event.

This past November, at the Pozo Old-Time Gathering, my musical partner, Susan Platz, and I performed our first gig since the onset of COVID. What an emotional experience to play twin fiddle, sing songs, and perform banjo/fiddle duets in front of a lively audience again! Los Angeles’ “Down at the Yard” music series, hosted by Kelly Marie Martin and Frank Fairfield, was home to the Tiki Parlour CD release concert for Clinton Davis,



a new emerging super talent on fiddle, banjo, piano, guitar, and song. It was a packed house that even had a child fiddler busking with his father outside. My heart swelled. Old-time music is back in person and the powerful connection between SoCal and NorCal is evident in almost everything we do out here.

Written by David Bragger. Photo: David and Susan Platz and the UCLA ensemble – courtesy of David.

Old-Time Music During the Pandemic

Old-time music is dependent on its social gatherings, so the complications of the pandemic proved especially challenging to our communities around California. Some in-person events did take place, however, be they with a scaled down version, an online version, or organized with added safety procedures and distancing in mind.



Through Summer and Fall, outdoor gigs were the first to open up and have resumed or started up at venues that are lucky enough to have outdoor space or a parklet. Skillet Licorice has been playing every Tuesday at the Page on Divisadero Street in San Francisco, bringing in friends to help them out, and it’s been quite a well-attended and festive scene.

It goes to show that local neighborhoods, having become a refuge during the pandemic, can be home to some top shelf music. The Bernal Star in beautiful downtown Bernal Heights, has resumed live music, shifting to outdoors on Saturdays or Sundays, starting at 3:00. The Knuckle Knockers continue their residency there.

In good weather, small groups of us Old-time musicians have been meeting up to play in local parks. Players have organized musical camping trips, creating their own small safe-pod festivals, much to the delight of campers that happened to have landed in nearby campsites. I’ve heard recent reports of musicians circled around propane fire pits, a practice which took hold all through last winter, as did the wearing of fingerless gloves and wool hats. Anything to keep playing!

The CBA was part of a live music and jamming event at San Francisco’s Sparks Social Food truck park in conjunction with Bluegrass Pride’s ‘Porch Pride’ online show watch party, on

June 27th. As one of the first in-person events in a long time, it was eagerly attended by many CBA member pickers. Many local bands had playing slots on two stages, and there were nooks and crannies filled with jamming and audiences. Thanks to Ted Kuster and Matt Lauer for your work producing this event.

The Bay Area Old-time community was delighted to be able to hold the Berkeley Old-time Music Convention in September of 2021, which was mostly in-person and included outdoor workshops and online jams.

BOTMC concerts were held at the Freight & Salvage, which is large enough for groups of people to spread out, and included sets by Kate Brislin & Jody Stecker, Jake Blount, National Heritage Fellowship Award winner Eddy Bond, The Slate Mountain Ramblers from Mt. Airy North Carolina, and the Horsenecks!

The BOTMC was able to further its work with diversity, equity, and inclusion, with two workshops on Black banjo by leading banjo scholar Tony Thomas, who held a workshop for learning more about DEI as it relates to Old-time music and by forwarding music and artwork by Black artists.



A few words from Central Coast Old-time musician Amber Mueller: *There are so many reasons we feel lucky to be living on the central coast of California. We know people from decades of going to Fiddle Tunes, multiple events through the California Traditional Music Society, Lark Camp, and in the last decade to the Berkeley Old Time Music Convention. It is truly delightful to introduce our musician friends from the south to our musician friends north of us!*

Written by Karen Celia Heil. Screenshot of Slate Mountain Ramblers, Jake Blount, Suzy and Eric Thompson; and photo of Knuckle Busters Bill Foss, Karen Celia Heil, and Martha Hawthorne – Karen Celia Heil.

Out-of-the-Blue Volunteers

The CBA was, is, and I hope will forever be, mostly volunteer run. A non-profit demands volunteerism. Volunteers are invested in the organization to an extent that paid staff will never be. Of course, over its forty-five years the CBA has seen its share of difficulties and crises, but it is our volunteers who have built the CBA into the largest and most innovative Bluegrass organization in the US. The CBA has facilitated communication and interaction among professional and lay pickers, singers, and performers. We have spawned youth programs, outreach, inclusion of various factions, and yes, we still fill the stage with Bluegrass, Old-time, gospel, and traditional music, while uniting a diverse community.

So said CBA co-founder Carl Pagter in 2019 (though anyone who has hung around Carl would have been treated to the sentiment many times!). Volunteers populate the CBA board, the Regional Directors, the Leadership Team, the Youth Activities; they run the events, document with photos, keep the website fresh, write copy for CBA communications, lead CBA jams throughout the state, and secure stage acts. Many hold their positions for years, some come and go. Others just see a need beyond the established categories and volunteer their talents, unasked and unrecruited, out of the blue. Here are two of them.
~ Written by Editor.

David Carlson



I grew up in southern Minnesota on a farm. All I wanted as a kid was to be a basketball player and fly airplanes. Couldn't do either one of those for a living, so I went to school to study rocket engineering and ended up at Lockheed in Sunnyvale for some 20 years, where I was active in the Peninsula Folk Music Club playing guitar.

Later on, I did a 15-year stint in Denver and Bluegrass came to me by way of Bonnie and Clyde. I don't believe I even knew who Earl Scruggs was at that point. So anyway, I had wanted to learn "Foggy" and set out to do that. Not the best way to learn how to play banjo. But, having done that and learning other stuff, I was lucky (there weren't a bunch of

banjo pickers around in the late 70s like now), and was asked to join a garage band. So, we rehearsed and sallied forth on stage for a year or so before everybody's different obligations took priority. I moved to Sonoma County awhile back. I showed up at the Coffee Catz jam in Sebastopol, which had been the home of the CBA-sponsored Sonoma County jam for several decades. Ownership changed and we moved across the street to the Community Market for several years; they eventually decided Bluegrass jamming did not fit into their business model (go figure!). So, we were homeless once again until the Sebastopol HopMonk welcomed us. We had a good run there every Saturday afternoon....then Covid hit. When the County opened up again, I got in contact with Ernie Noyes because I remembered going to a jam he once held at the Arlene Francis Center in Santa Rosa. Ernie introduced me to the director there, and after volunteering a few days of labor, I got up the nerve to ask about using the space. Receiving a positive response allowed me to restart the Saturday jam there. I still had some Saturdays

to fill, and found out that Coffee Catz had changed hands, and was to become "Coffee and Moore". So I introduced myself on email and went to see the new owner, Ms. Moore, who was every bit as enthusiastic about live music there as I had heard. So that's how the "Catz" jam was reborn on two Saturdays a month. It's been great to see folks back playing in the jams!

It wouldn't have happened without David's seeing a need, pitching in, and making it work. Now David has started organizing the inaugural Winterfest Concert at the Arlene Francis Center - details on the CBA website. - Ed.

Phoebe Leigh-Suelflow

My mother was a reporter for the local newspaper and she would take me along on her assignments. I was hooked! Over the years I have written for and produced many newsletters and newspapers (my favorite: the mimeographed U.C. Berkeley International House Intergnat, with our hand-drawn PlayGnat of the Month feature). I've also written my share of articles in professional magazines and a tedious chapter in a practitioners handbook. And of course, being an attorney, I did a lot of writing. For a while I was the owner/operator of the Silverbird Press, a small letter press that printed books of poetry. Setting type is in my blood - my great-grandfather was an engraver in the days before newspapers ran photographs.



However, my favorite thing to do is to talk with people, listen to their stories, and write it all down. I consider myself an urban folklorist, and I love writing for the CBA newsletter because I get to talk with really interesting people. In fact, writing a CBA newsletter article led me to start a Facebook group, the L.A. Bluegrass History Project, which seeks to preserve Southern California's rich Bluegrass history. It's so important to keep this alive!

My father was an amateur musician - his grave reads: "Physicist, Teacher and Tenor". Back then I grew up singing along with him the tenor parts of many requiems and oratorios. Later, the two of us sang together as a "package deal" in choirs (me, singing soprano).

My childhood trauma was being forced to play classical violin, and I trudged to school with a violin case every day for eight years. As soon as I could, I gave it all up and my next fifty years were unmusical. Six years ago I hunted through the closet and found my old violin. A few months later, I saw a listing for a "Bluegrass for Beginners Jam" at a Dog Park in Long Beach. I had no idea what "Bluegrass" or a "jam" was, but hey, I was a beginner, so I qualified. I went to the park and got hooked. There should be warnings. I have been going back ever since.

Bluegrass has introduced me to the most interesting people. Bluegrassers are some of the most energetic, engaged, and fascinating people I have met. They're out doing things, going places, and trying to get themselves and others better.

Bluegrass has enriched my life - I'm doing things now that I never thought I would be doing. Just this week, we Dog Park Pickers performed at our first show! The only downside is that Bluegrass has lightened my wallet (Brandon, I love my fabulous new fiddle!!! but hey, it's an investment)! Thank you, Bluegrass and Bluegrassers! Please continue to tell me your stories!

Out of the blue Phoebe Leigh-Suelflow sent me an email a year or so ago: "You need more interviews with musicians particularly in Southern California, and I'd like to do it." Gladly accepted were surveys ranging from the legendary musicians of SoCal's golden age of Bluegrass in the 1960s and 70s to beginners relaying their enthusiasms and trepidations. In short, the whole gamut! - Ed.

Photos: David Carlson at the HopMonk jam in Sebastopol 2020; Alice Fitzwater, David Carlson, Marc Francis, and David Thiessen at Coffee Catz jam in 2014 - Patrick Campbell. Phoebe Leigh-Suelflow - by Robin Frenette



NorCal & SoCal Jams Are Opening Up

Garage Jam



As Maria stocked the tables with enough beer, wine, and pizza for fifty guests, her partner bet her that no more than twelve folks would show up. By the time jam leader Ted Kuster launched into Red River Valley, enough eager

voices were rising in three-part harmony to fill the open garage bay up to the literal rafters. Dave Hanks followed with Footprints in the Snow, and by then the crowd had swelled to forty. And this was before the jam officially began! They kept streaming in. Maria easily won her bet.

The CBA-sponsored Garage Jam is the brainchild of CBA stalwart and mandolinist Maria do Ceu, the co-owner of Out West Garage in Petaluma. Maria had invited a few of her socially distanced and masked picking pals to join her during the pandemic, but by May she sensed a yearning and willingness to gather in larger jams.

She contacted CBA board member and Regional Director Coordinator Ted Kuster, who got the word out, and the June 7 Garage Jam became the first CBA-endorsed event since our live music world was shut down!

The Garage Jam will be held the first Monday of each month at the Out West Garage in Petaluma. Keep

your eye on the website Events Calendar for details.

You can read about other Northern California jams in the “Out-of-the-Blue” section of this Report.

Written by editor. Photos of Maria and the inaugural Garage Jam – Patrick Campbell

SoCal Jams

Donna Hargis, CBA Regional Director for Region 6 – Huntington Beach – and an avid jammer herself, has the latest info for folks looking for Bluegrass jams in Orange County or Long Beach.

At Recreation Park in Long Beach, there is a jam every Saturday at 10:00 a.m. next to the dog park. This is an intermediate jam; it gets pretty big, often splitting into two jams.

At the same time, there is a very beginner-friendly jam in Fountain Valley at Mile Square Park, near the corners of Warner and Euclid.

A longstanding weeknight jam that has changed a lot over the years is “The Soup Jam.” One of the

changes – no soup, just jam! This is a weekly jam that starts at 7:00 pm on Tuesdays and is in Signal Hill, at a business near 28th and Gundry. Look for the parked cars!

Project Barley in Lomita is the hot spot for a Bluegrass jam on the first Tuesday of each month, starting at 7:00 pm. All are welcome and beer consumption is encouraged. (Take some home! This business owner has been very kind to the Bluegrass community.)

The newest jam, called “Bluegrass Pub Club” is in South County on the first and third Monday of each month beginning at 6pm. This is a beginner/intermediate jam currently hosted at the Round Table Pizza in Tustin. (The location may change, but find this group on social media to stay informed.)

And if you don’t see what you are looking for, start a jam! We could always use more.

Written by Donna Hargis. Photos of “Dog Jam” – Zenfolio archive; Donna Hargis with Mark Shutts and Eric Pittman – Robin Frenette.



Financial Report

Turning Adversity into Opportunity



The CBA has done well in spite of COVID. Very careful management, clear goals, and hard work have kept our finances in good shape, our programs alive, and has helped our online presence evolve. The Father's Day Festival week is the main source of operating funds for the CBA, and we were not able to hold the Festival, Music Camp, and Youth Academy in 2020 or 2021! BUT....The online programs - Turn Your Radio OnLINE II and Jam-a-Thon were magical.

Following these successes, the Board created a grant writing initiative and the committee went to work applying for Grants. Three grants were funded to the CBA. Total \$372,695! Yes, we will now have to keep all our ducks in a row, because we will be audited!

The CBA met the goals that the Board established for Fiscal Year 2021 and has set up the structure and financial wherewithal to do so again for the upcoming 2022.

Numbers to notice in the Financial Reports.

- ▶ Total Bank Accounts \$615,590. This is a direct result of the receipt of grants totaling \$372,695.
- ▶ Income and expense total from operations – not including income from investments or depreciation – was a loss of \$5,482. This is a very excellent number considering the loss of our main fundraiser.

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californiabluegrass.org/cba-membership/

Your membership will help keep Bluegrass, Old-time, and traditional Gospel music alive and thriving, and you will become a member of the friendliest music organization in California.

Other Numbers to know:

- ▶ The Father's Day Festival costs will cost close to \$350,000 in 2022. This could be much higher because of all the rising costs due to inflation. This number does not include Music Camp and Youth Academy.
- ▶ The administration of the CBA costs over \$100,000 per year. This includes insurance, websites, the Bluegrass Breakdown, accounting, and a little dab of publicity. This is without offices or full-time paid staff. The admin expense is offset by dues that total near \$40,000 per year, but relies heavily on net income from the Festival.
- ▶ Speaking of dues, did you know that dues for the CBA are little more than \$2 per month? This is crazy.

Do you want more details? All the Financial reports and tax returns are available to you on the Website!

Any questions? Just ask:

ValerieCornejo@CaliforniaBluegrass.net

*Written and sidebars by CBA treasurer Val Cornejo.
Photo of Val from FDF 2008 - Zenfolio archives*

CBA FY 2021 Highlights and Accomplishments

Another year of trying to survive in spite of COVID. Events planned and then canceled. COVID policies created and adjusted as needed. The CBA dug in its heels and went to the woodshed to work on projects and improvements.

Jam-a-Thon: Nominated for International Bluegrass Music Association Event of the Year:

Turn Your Radio Online II (TYRO) produced 8 webcasts 40 hours of programing benefiting bands and musicians

CBA Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee formed

New UPGRADED Website - Launched new website with new technology

Bluegrass Camp Out iPad App (Youth) Purchased & Updated: Formerly known as Barnyard Bluegrass

CBA Youth musicians / IBMA Video Collaboration

Grant writing initiative: GRANTS AWARDED to CBA \$372,232

Salesforce Membership Database Project evolves and adds outside consultant to team

Permanent Mailing Address & Phone Number established

Zenfolio photo site established

Online Music Camp Produced & Presented

Policies & Procedures Manual Under Construction

Clovis Bluegrass in the Park Bluegrass Concert Series

Several local jams sponsored

Founders Video Project Produced – currently being edited

Band Contracts Re-worked

Membership Campaign designed & implemented

Bluegrass Breakdown Newsletter

Expanded CBA Online presence

Controlled costs during COVID “down time”

THE CBA BOARD of DIRECTORS

Board Member Training and Expectation Program - Board Members Tackle BIG Projects - Board Operational Calendar created & Utilized - Board Member Liaison Assignments - The Board Package and Consent Agenda (Genius!)

EVENTS & Programs in Planning Stages:

- ▶ SoCal Event: South State 48 Jam Event at the Carlsbad by the Sea Hotel
- ▶ Music Camp in SoCal: Research stage
- ▶ Bluegrass in the Classroom; Research Stage
- ▶ Bluegrass in Prisons: Research Stage

New Policies

- ▶ Contract Development and Refinement
- ▶ Contract Signing Policy: Approved by Board
- ▶ Contract Approval Policy: Approved by the Board
- ▶ Investment Strategy - Reserve Fund Development & Definition : approved by the Board
- ▶ Contract & Event Planning & Budgeting Refinement: Endorsed by Finance Committee
- ▶ Diversity Statement Approved by the Board

Committees- Working & Effective

Executive Committee , Finance Committee, Membership Development - New member campaign, FDF Strategy & Planning, Communication Strategy Committee, Fundraising & Business Development Committee

Other Cool Stuff

- ▶ CBA supports Bands and musicians – TYRO, Jam-a-Thon, Online Music Camp
- ▶ CBA Volunteers ROCK: Volunteer Super Stars: (Pete, Deb, Robin, Patrick , Lani, Tessa, so many!! ...)

Regional Territory Map re-defined

Osher Foundation Relationship Established – Lifelong Learning Project

Digitizing Board Meeting Minutes Project Approved

Bruce Sadownick Appointed Publicity Director

CBA Business Cards: Created & Distributed (Who would have thought?)

Highlights and Accomplishments Cont...

CBA FY 2021 Financial Overview		
Membership and Administration	Income	Expense
Membership & Membership Development	38,373	2,476
Breakdown (Member Newsletter)		18,623
Mercantile	-	-
Administration and Donations	6,229	30,144
Website		7,150
Investments, Interest & Depreciation	19,502	5,239
Programs		
Youth Programs	2,620	8,911
Heritage & Archive Projects		2,247
D E & I		-
Fundraising & Grants	372,695	
Father's Day Week		
Father's Day Festival (no event held)	-	5,350
Music Camp Online	5,347	5,957
Youth Academy (No event held)	65	1,104
Events		
Camp Outs (No Camp Outs Held)	-	150
Jam-a-Thon (Online Band Jam Marathon)	25,702	15,911
Great 48 (No Event Held)	-	-
South State 48 (Planning Stages)	-	639
IBMA (Online Event- Sponsorship)	-	1,388
Old Time Gathering & Golden Old Time Campout	-	-
Turn Your Radio Online (Online Series of Concerts)	25,284	9,052
	495,817	114,341
Notes:		
Depreciation was \$7,075.		

The California Bluegrass Association board of directors is delighted to send this 2021 Annual Report to all current and past members. In the Report you will see how the CBA has weathered the Covid pandemic and emerged stronger than ever. If you are not already a CBA member or you have let your membership lapse, we invite you to (re)join the CBA here:

californiabluegrass.org/cba-membership/

Your membership will help keep Bluegrass, Old-time, and traditional Gospel music alive and thriving, and you will become a member of the friendliest music organization in California.

CBA Youth Activities Report

Jam-a-Thon Nominated for IBMA Event of the Year



Starting at 5 pm on January 8, 2021, the CBA hosted a benefit for the association’s Youth Academy called Jam-a-Thon. It was a major achievement and was nominated by the IBMA for the prestigious Event of the Year award.

The impresario behind the Jam-a-Thon was Kimber Ludiker, Youth Academy Director, who was assisted by Youth Program Coordinator Darby Brandli, Youth Ambassador Tessa Schwartz, and emcee Tristan Scroggins.

Darby and Kimber were looking for a way to keep the Bluegrass community engaged during the pandemic and to simultaneously raise money for online educational materials for kids. Kimber thought What if we did a telethon-type of event and kept a live stream going

for twenty-four hours straight? Darby and the CBA board of directors gave the go-ahead, and Jam-a-Thon was born.

Kimber used her music industry contacts to reach musicians from around the globe: twelve different countries and over 200 participating artists. 24 hours quickly became 50. Kimber and her team - having never done anything like this before - had to figure out the technical end: how to set up and run a stream, do virtual sound checks, host an online green room, and do the emcee duties.

The first rule of the Jam-a-Thon was that all sites be Covid-safe. Many family bands and small groupings, often distanced, played in Covid-bubbles. This gave the Jam-a-Thon a chance to showcase solo and duo acts. Memorable was a

could play together, overcoming the dreaded internet lag.

Kimber underscores that this last year and a half has been tough for musicians. As an artist, you think that the worst thing that can happen to you is to break an arm or finger or your health fails. But no one could have imagined that suddenly every venue would close and live music stop. Being a musician is a hard career, even in the good times. So, part of the Jam-a-Thon’s mission was to connect the larger community of musicians, who were struggling. The Jam-a-Thon not only raised money for the kids but gave some back to the performers.

Though it eventually ended as a runner-up for the final award, the CBA could not be prouder of the passion, creativity, and skill that brought the event to life!



Written by Darby and Kimber. Screen shots: Mei Lin Heirendt; Kimber and Darby.

segment in which Laurie Lewis and Kathy Kallick appeared side-by-side - though they were in fact in different locations - to trade songs. The team arranged it so that they

World of Bluegrass wrap-up

A small contingent of CBA leaders headed to Raleigh this October. The CBA decided months ago to decrease our usual in-person involvement and canceled all previously scheduled live events there because of Covid. The Covid protocols required by the IBMA (mandatory masks and vaccinations at all

events) worked extremely well and the entire event felt very safe.

Every year talented kids from all over the world audition for spots in the IBMA KOB. The 30 kids pictured were selected in 2021. Since young people under twelve did not yet have vaccinations, the CBA approached the IBMA



...Youth - cont.

and offered to produce a video of the IBMA Kids on Bluegrass so our talented youth could still participate. Deanie Richardson and Kimber Ludiker curated the video, which can be found on the CBA website in the Youth section. The video was screened during the IBMA Awards Show at the Duke Energy Center on Thursday night. Deanie selected songs from four recently deceased artists for the young musicians to play: Byron Berline, Tony Rice, Tom T. Hall, and John Prine were musically honored by the KOB.

Our own Mei Lin Heirendt sang Early Morning Rain and fiddlers Tessa Schwartz and Niko Quale

were among the 30 young musicians featured. CBA's Crying Uncle and MohaviSoul had been selected by the IBMA as official showcase bands and they performed multiple sets. Mei Lin performed with five other IBMA KOB at the Red Carpet Reception of the Awards Show. Momentum Award Nominees Miles and Teo Quale and Daisy Caire were also present at the Momentum Luncheon.

Banjo great, Pete Warnick, sent this wonderful note to CBA: I saw the very well-done and moving tribute to Byron Berline, Tom T. Hall, Tony Rice, and John Prine performed by a wonderful cast of kids on the big

screen at the IBMA Awards Show in Raleigh. It was amazing... All those kids learning those songs, and then a masterful editing job putting it all together. Great work, everyone!

Pete Ludé adds: It was a great learning experience for CBA, as we look to build our online presence, and the Association was very fortunate to benefit from the extraordinary video work of Dylan Ladds, who took the lead in putting this together. You can see more of his work at [Doosterfilm.com](https://www.doosterfilm.com).

*Written by CBA Youth Program director Darby Brandli.
Photo screenshot: [youtube.com/watch?v=dNiH_Ss4DEL](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dNiH_Ss4DEL).*

Darby Brandli reports on some Youth activity updates:



The Kids Instrument Lending Library was the brainchild of Darrell Johnston, past CBA Treasurer. Darrell had a great love for Bluegrass and Old-time music and was passionate about children learning to play music. For many years Randy January lovingly managed the program, and the inventory of donated instruments (guitar, mandolin, fiddle, bass, banjo, dobro) has grown under his leadership. There are now almost 105 instruments in the Library, 70 of which are in the hands of the children of CBA members. As of 2022, the Lending Library will have a new librarian: Sharon Khadder of Alameda. We will be moving our inventory to the East Bay after the first of the year. We welcome your donations! Sharon can be reached here: kidslendinglibrary@gmail.com. Many thanks to Randy for shepherding the Library for so many years.



Coming in early 2022 "Bluegrass Campground", a Bluegrass teaching app for the young at heart. The app will be available in the Apple App Store for iPad. Watch for details and updates on the CBA website!

The CBA Bluegrass Academy will hopefully be launched by the end of February. We have chosen a platform. Kimber is about to get the first modules done (five instrument instruction videos). Three of the five instructors are chosen. Nothing is recorded yet. The end of February is chosen because the CBA is going to have a presence at Wintergrass, and that would be a perfect place to launch.

Photo: playing a donated Gibson mandolin at FDF 2009. Zenfolio archive.

CBA Events Wrap-up

The Great 48 2020



Each year on the first Thursday of January the CBA world begins as it did once again in 2020. Bakersfield, roughly halfway between Sacramento and San Diego, was the venue. Hundreds of pickers gathered from across the state – some even from the east coast – to greet old friends and meet new ones, share stories and tunes. Much of the activity as always took place in smaller random combos in guest rooms, Bluegrass organization suites, corridors, and best of all in the expansive areas around the bar. Many attendees joined

local music lovers in the ballroom for some great acts: The Greasy Spoons, AJ Lee and Blue Summit, Central Valley Boys, and North Country Blue.

In retrospect, it had a bit of a feeling of the Titanic: little did we know the Bluegrass and Old-time world was about to implode for almost two years. But now it's time for the 2022 Great 48. Let the 2022 Bluegrass and Old-time year begin!!

Written by Editor. Photos: dancing – Robin Frenette; Darby and Theresa at welcome table – Patrick Campbell



TYRO: a "Virtual" Father's Day Festival

There is no substitute for the Father's Day Festival each summer, but the CBA made an ambitious attempt to fill the void through Turn Your Radio OnLINE – a series of weekly webcasts concluding on Father's Day weekend – June 20. Over the five-week series, CBA presented nearly 17 hours of programming that featured 32 performances of Bluegrass and Old-time music.

The series was accompanied by an online silent auction and a raffle. Many of the bands you would have enjoyed at Grass Valley contributed their talents, including the Tim O'Brien Band, Kathy Kallick Band, Lonesome River Band, and Special Consensus. The series also featured special appearances by Molly Tuttle, Peter Rowan, Tony Kamel (of Wood & Wire), Leroy Troy, and many more.

Each week TYRO also featured kids' songs from the CBA Youth program and a series of "Pocket Lessons" from top Bluegrass and Old-time instructors. The series culminated with the gala webcast on June 20, featuring many of the performers that we had hoped to be with in person at the Father's Day Bluegrass Festival.

The project was made possible by a group of over two dozen dedicated CBA volunteers, tackling all tasks



including administering the auction, video production, and promotion. TYRO raised over \$40,000 through a combination of tips, donations, auction and raffle revenue, and other support. These funds supported Bluegrass and Old-time musicians and helped defray CBA financial losses. All the webcasts are still available for viewing on www.TurnYourRadio.online.

Written by Pete Ludé. Screenshot photo of hosts Jeanie and Chuck Poling.

...Events Wrap Up (cont)

Board Member Karen Celia Heil reports on the online Music Camp

We are finding ways to continue to teach and share traditional music during the pandemic. With that in mind, the CBA was not able to present the annual in-person 2021 Grass Valley Music Camp, and instead created an exciting online Camp day on June 12, 2021.

Camp Directors Peter Langston and Tina Webster produced a set of eight online workshops taught by outstanding Music Camp instructors and held over the Zoom platform. There were opportunities to ask questions and have discussions with the instructors. Four sessions, each with two independent workshops, allowed students to participate in up to four workshops during the course of the Camp.

CBA Fall Campout 2021

The CBA’s Fall Campout 2021 was a great success. We met in Lodi, where the turnout was almost normal. There were still a few camping spots left, but all in all, the place was full of friends gathering to play music! And not just Bluegrass, mind you. We have a group that has come every year that plays swingy jazzy stuff. It was wonderful as they came from around the building and shared their music with the rest of the gang. All Are Welcome!!!

We offered a few new things this year that were well received. The most important event was the Friday night concert held on the amphitheater stage! Birches Bend and Mei Lin, Ida and Friends were both fantastic. The attendance was great. We know this took people away from jamming for two hours, but we didn’t hear any complaints: after all, they got to hear these two wonderful youth bands! And we raised money for the Youth Programs!!!



Our lineup of teachers was stellar: Kimber Ludiker from the band Della Mae taught Bluegrass Fiddle. John Reischman and Sharon Gilchrist hosted mandolin classes. Jack Tuttle and Jim Nunally handled the guitar classes and the great Alice Gerrard offered a class in Southern Traditional singing. Both Tony Trischka and Allison Brown held down the banjo classes. What a treat!

Peter Langston and Tina Webster add: We’re planning an in-person CBA Summer Music Camp for 2022, June 12th to 15th at the Nevada County Fairgrounds! It will feature Bluegrass and Old-time classes, jams, concerts, catered meals, and a couple of dances!

Registration opens February 7th. Visit the Camp website (www.cbamusiccamp.com) or send us email (info@cbamusiccamp.com) for details.



Another new offering were the food and beverage vendors. We had tacos, burritos, and beer for those that were hungry and thirsty. We hope to do this again!

Our Annual Member Meeting was well attended, and we honored several CBA volunteers with awards for their generous contributions over the years.

We hope you will join us at the Spring Campout in Lodi April 19 -24, 2022, when we will once again welcome the California Old Time Fiddle Association for their Fiddle Contest!!!

Written by Deb Livermore. Photos: Mei Lin, Ida and Friends – Patrick Campbell; moon over the concert stage – Robin Frenette.

South State 48



In the winter of 2020, CBA created a Southern California task force with instructions to find venues to host music events. The dedicated volunteers identified a need for a large-scale event in SoCal that would bring musicians together from throughout the Southwest. On November 5-7, 2021, the CBA produced a brand-new jamming festival, “South State 48 – Bluegrass by the Sea”, in Carlsbad, CA at the Carlsbad by the Sea Hotel.



Jamming, jamming, jamming. You asked for it and you gave it your all! On Saturday afternoon a volunteer counted over fifteen jams taking place at one time, and that’s just the ones he found. Bluegrass, Old-time, Western Swing, and Gospel jams were just some of the many styles of music that were overheard throughout the entire hotel, all day, and all night.

It wasn’t only jamming: workshops in Fiddle, Mandolin,

Guitar Rhythm, Jamming 101, Swing Jam, and an informative Music Business class were a major part of the weekend. Each evening built into a crescendo with five local bands that performed at the hotel and in the adjacent Windmill Food Hall, a 12–restaurant complex with a full bar.

The SS48 was attended by over 500 music fans from SoCal, NorCal, and members of Bluegrass organizations in adjacent states. Some wonderful connections and friendships were made! The venue was open not only to hotel guests; many attendees stayed at nearby lodgings (the hotel guest rooms having sold out almost immediately) or just dropped by for the day to pick in hotel rooms and the lush outdoor courtyard that had been set aside for 24/7 jamming. As at the Great 48, some rooms were reserved for quiet hours after 10pm.

The second annual South State 48 – Bluegrass by the Sea will take place Nov 3-6, 2022, and CBA members will get priority access to steeply discounted hotel rooms. Stay



up to date at www.SouthState48.com and the CBA website.

Written by Danny “Hootenanny” Clark. Photos: Danny with banjo; CBA board members Ted Kuster and Dave Gooding – Robin Frenette.

2021 Southern California and neighboring Bluegrass events



Southern California is starting to open up – slowly. Starting in the late spring, we saw the cautious beginnings of life as we’ve known it in the past. We attended campouts, jams, concerts, and other get-togethers. These were often held outdoors to take advantage of the great weather and to avoid Covid super-spreading. The highlights have been:

- Summergrass – held in August in Vista – You can’t beat a festival with the Lonesome River Band, Special Consensus, Bluegrass Etc., High Fidelity and the Po’ Ramblin’ Boys. They were joined by locals Chris Cerna and Bluegrass Republic, Drought Tolerant Bluegrass, and the Bluegrass Brethren. After missing 2020, it was good to be back together at this SoCal event, which feels like a family reunion.

- South State 48 – held in November in Carlsbad. This inaugural event is covered elsewhere.
- Concerts at Shutts Fabricators – The Shutts shop in Huntington Beach was the site for concerts by Nu-Blu, Special Consensus, David Grier, and others this year. The cozy up-close atmosphere makes it a popular venue as a stopover for touring bands.
- The Redlands Bowl in Redlands included two Bluegrass bands, the John Jorgenson Bluegrass Band and Balsam Range, as part of their Summer Music Festival series.
- The North County Bluegrass and Folk Club sponsored two Bluegrass Resurrection events in June at Snyder’s Big Red Barn in Valley Center. The groups were the Gilly Girls, and Nathan James and Prairie Sky.

- And let’s not forget Arizona’s great Pickin’ in the Pines! There were a lot of notable absences for a second year. The Topanga Fiddle and Banjo Contest was not held, although there was a fundraising event that took place. The Santa Barbara Old-Time Fiddlers’ Convention and Festival was replaced by a campout this year.

Compiled by Phoebe Leigh-Suelflow. Photos clockwise from top left: fans and Peter Rowan with young friends at Brookdale Bluegrass Festival; fans and dancing at Pickin’ in the Pines – Robin Frenette.



CBA’s Commitment to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion



The California Bluegrass community has always been a very warm and welcoming group, and the CBA is committed to keeping and expanding that sense of community -- especially through our current, sometimes turbulent times. To CBA, this means welcoming pickers at any level – from beginners to seasoned pros; welcoming fans of traditional Bluegrass, progressive jam-grass, Old-time, gospel music, and the myriad of sub-genres; and welcoming everyone passionate about this music, irrespective of their cultural origins, religious beliefs, gender identity, or anything

else. After all, Bluegrass music itself is a perfect example of the American “melting pot”, with influences from Celtic music, African American Blues, Appalachian traditions, and gospel harmonies. We are indebted to this rich set of diverse influences for creating the music that binds our common interest. CBA is also aware that California’s population is unique in that no race or ethnic group constitutes a majority of the state’s population: 39% of state residents are Latino, 36% are white, 15% are Asian or Pacific Islander, 10% are African American, Native American or multiracial.

During 2021 the CBA board formalized our commitment to welcoming everyone by forming the Diversity, Equality and Inclusion (DEI) Committee, to which I was assigned Chair for the past year. The group began by drafting the CBA position statement, which was approved by the Board. You can refer to it below.

Moving forward, the DEI Committee will be exploring the ways that CBA can continue to understand and embrace everyone who might be a future Bluegrass or

Old-time fan. Our plans include:

- Tracking: CBA will find ways to keep track of the composition of our volunteer leaders, featured performers, instructors, and members. Are we, as a group, fully representing everyone who is (or soon will be!) a Bluegrass or Old-time fan?
- Education: Bluegrass music was created through an amalgamation of diverse musical styles and traditions, including some remarkable early African-American musicians, influential women stars, and many others. We want to help tell more of these stories.
- Inclusion: We’ll be making sure that everyone who loves traditional American Music feels very welcome at all CBA events, irrespective of their gender, skill-level, religion, race, physical abilities, sexual identity, age, or anything else that makes them who they are.

We invite your ideas and thoughts – perhaps you’d like to contribute to this process. Please contact me at LaniWay@CaliforniaBluegrass.net.

Photo of Lani – Zenfolio archive

California Bluegrass Association
Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion Policy

The CBA celebrates the diverse cultural origins of Bluegrass and Old-time music traditions and seeks to foster a community that welcomes and encourages all forms of participation and involvement by people of all backgrounds. We believe diversity and inclusion are essential to the well-being and continued growth of Bluegrass and Old-time music in California and beyond.

The CBA will actively work to open its doors to a broad range of members, fans, and performers that reflects the diversity of California itself. We will promote equality and combat discrimination, thereby creating a culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion that invites all to participate in our events and in the music we play and perform. We will educate ourselves, consistently listen to others, and proactively work on diversity, equity, and inclusion in the long term.

Have you ever wondered how the Father's Day Festival happens?



the CBA can say: “Come back next year --- X and Y will be playing here!” The marketing side of the festival is already working on a logo that will be used for t-shirts and advertising.

One of the most important positions is the Volunteer Coordinator, who has the job of recruiting volunteers to work the at Festival. There are benefits to being a volunteer, but they depend on the job. If your job allows you to see the Main Stage while you are working, you have to dedicate



Many of us show up in June for the Music Camp and the Father's Day Festival. We pitch a tent or park our RV, have a great time jamming with our friends and listening to music. On Sunday we say goodbye and look forward to next year's festival. Often nary a thought is given about how it all happens or where the ice may come from or how the RVs are parked. The Father's Day Festival is done almost entirely by volunteers, and it takes a lot of planning and work. So, we talked with some folks who know to find out how they do it.

The planning for the Festival begins at least 18 months in advance. First, the Board decides on a budget. Then the Festival Entertainment Coordinator and Talent Advisory Group (TAG) begin their search for artists for the Main Stage. The Coordinator and TAG members contact the bands and work out the dates and prices. Then they go to the Board with their recommendations. The Board makes the final determination, after which the Committee sends out the contracts and draws up the final schedule. This is often done before the end of the current year's FDF so



16 hours (usually four 4-hour shifts) of volunteer service to earn a festival pass. If you can't hear

or see the Main Stage, then it's 12 hours (or 3 four-hour shifts). You must be a CBA member. Volunteers are assigned to one of 22 different crews.

Once June comes around, the Festival Director goes to the site, usually the Saturday or Sunday before the Festival, and may spend the next 12 days there. The first days are spent establishing the Music Camp. A front gate is set up on Saturday before Music Camp attendees arrive on Sunday morning. While the Music Camp is going on, the Director and volunteers head for the storage facilities that the CBA keeps in the area and transport the supplies to the fairgrounds.

The CBA offers 20-amp electric-only camping for 90 RVs. Volunteers mark out the RV spots in the field with paint and lay out the electric lines on the grid. A generator has been rented and fuel is purchased. The boxes and equipment are connected, and the RV spaces are readied for use. The stage is delivered by a commercial contractor on Tuesday and a flurry of activity begins. Lighting is set up on the stage. There is a box on stage for the circuit breakers, and the electrical wiring gets laid down. The fencing people come in and put up fences to mark the backstage and partition off the CBA's half of the fairgrounds, so that only ticket holders and campers can get in. A tent company puts up backstage tents, which become a green room, and a caterer comes with food.

When the Music Camp closes on Wednesday, the EZ-ups are moved to the Festival area. Now the activity kicks into high gear because everything must be in place for Thursday.

The Concessions Coordinator has decided what concessions to have, and where they will be placed. When the concessionaires show up, they need to make sure their operations comply with the fire marshal's

requirements. For example, if it's a food tent where there is cooking, the booths must be at least 20 feet apart. The fire marshal comes through on Wednesday evening. His team inspects the vendors, and the rest of the set-up and makes sure everything meets their requirements. The festival can't start until the fire marshal says that everything – and they mean everything is compliant with their stringent regulations.

Another Coordinator takes care of golf carts and the “people mover”. The golf carts they had ordered in advance are delivered. When they break down, they need to call the company and get a replacement.

The seating area is outlined. At the front gate, Coordinators take care of ticketing, payments, and distributing wristbands. Other volunteers direct RVs to their spots. Who gets a hookup? Who is dry camping? Vern's stage is set up for the initial concert on Wednesday evening. Wednesday night is exciting: the musicians are teachers from the Music Camp. For example, at one festival David Grisman, John Reischman, and several other hot mandolin players all got up on the intimate stage together and played. Magic happens here because you don't know who you will get.

Thursday witnesses the seating rush, as people jockey to secure the best places to put their chairs. The Hospitality/Safety Crew manages the influx of people, checks wristbands, provides information, and handles safety functions. The ice freezer is delivered, and the ice booth set up. Ice is critical because it can get very hot in June and the food vendors must have ice. And of course, the portapotties need to be in place! A medical team made up of EMT-trained volunteers open a first aid booth that includes an emergency defibrillator.

The Back Stage Coordinator's goal is to make sure that all



goes smoothly for the bands. The backstage venue provides refreshments and a warm-up tent: even pins and ironing boards for freshening up costumes have been thought of! D'Addario has donated strings; and there are several basses backstage in case they're needed. The Back Stage Coordinator ensures the artists get on and off the stage in time. There's a clock that times the sets. When the clock hits 0 they're done, and the mics get shut off.

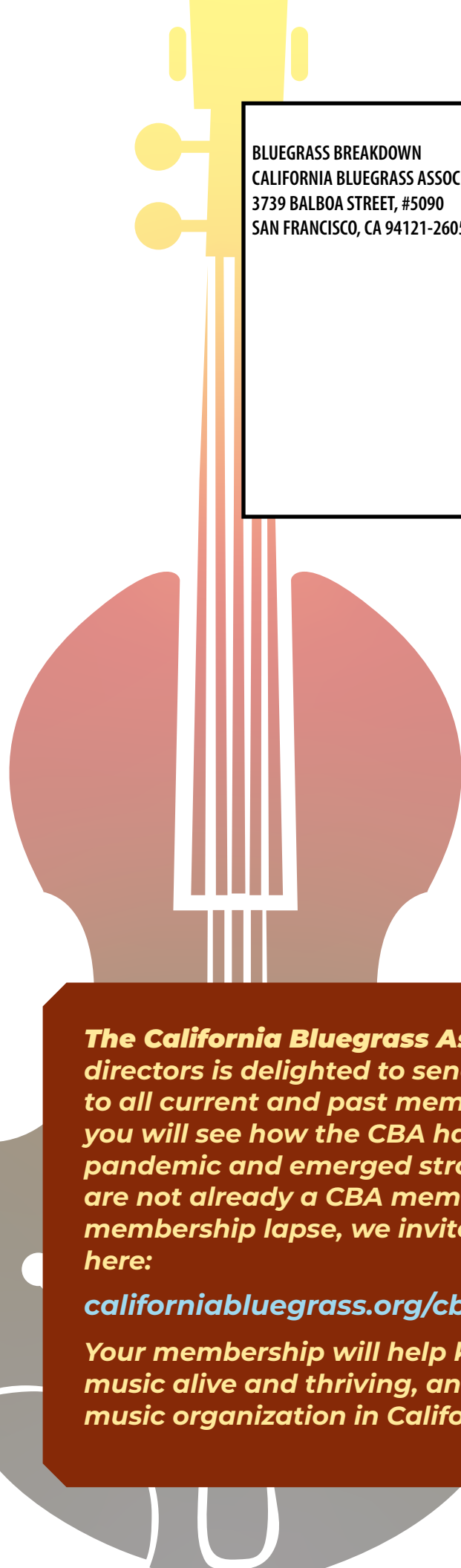
Tear-down starts on Sunday morning. As soon as the last act is

off the Main Stage, all hell breaks loose. They're on a tight timeline, as the festival grounds are rented by the day and all traces of our Festival must be cleared out by that evening. The crew makes a final check of the fairgrounds for things that have been left behind. The Festival Director and the remaining volunteers finally leave on Monday evening.

The Festival goes on with memories of the music they've heard, the jams they've played in, and the acts they have enjoyed. Volunteers have helped to make this happen. Most of us didn't see what was going on, but now we know. So, let's appreciate the volunteers and maybe even volunteer ourselves to make the Festival's return in 2022 the best yet.

Written by Phoebe Leigh-Suelflow, who interviewed Geoffrey Sargent, Montie Elston, Dave Gooding, Deb Livermore, Mark Hogan. Photos: serving food and people mover – Zenfolio archive; golf cart – Alan Bond; CBA welcome booth, food concession; Rainy Escobar at the instrument raffle, CBA staff photographer Alan Bond and checking in cars at the gate – Patrick Campbell FDF 2019.





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californiabluegrass.org/cba-membership/

Your membership will help keep Bluegrass, Old-time, and traditional Gospel music alive and thriving, and you will become a member of the friendliest music organization in California.

