



BLUEGRASS BREAKDOWN

Preserving and growing bluegrass, old-time, gospel, and traditional music in California since 1974



April 2026



Photo by Robin Frenette

SO MUCH TO HEAR AT FATHER'S DAY FESTIVAL

by the Bluegrass Breakdown

It's wild to think we're just two months away from the largest bluegrass festival west of the Rocky Mountains—our very own Father's Day Bluegrass Festival in Grass Valley! The CBA Talent Acquisition Group has outdone itself yet again, recruiting an exciting array of new names and familiar faces in bluegrass and old-time. Some of these acts are dyed-in-the-wool Californians, like Broken Compass Bluegrass, who are making a name for themselves as road warriors on the national club and festival scene. Others represent the crème de la crème from the national scene, like Missy Raines and Allegheny, the recent Bluegrass Hall of Fame inductees the Bluegrass Cardinals, and Ohio's Price Sisters. The Po' Ramblin' Boys are a little of both, as a national act featuring our own John Gooding on guitar. Old-time aficionados will be thrilled for the return of Tatiana Hargreaves and Nokosee Fields to the CBA fold, this time with Sonya Badigian and Aaron Tacke, as Hard Drive. And we're thrilled to include for the first time on a CBA stage the Sam Grisman Project, whose band leader is

carrying on the proud California tradition of Dawg music from his current home base in Nashville, Tennessee. We'll also be featuring five bands as our California Showcase acts—hot pickers and great singers from around the Golden State.

We owe a big round of applause to the Talent Acquisition Group—made up of volunteers Karen Celia Heil, Mary Kusmaul, Matt Lauer, and Helen Ludé, and led by bluegrass maven Danny "Hootenanny" Clark as our talent buyer—for another successful round in its never-ending quest to bring us a top-shelf musical marquee year after year. Thanks in large part to their tireless scouting of bands that this past year included a special trip to IBMA to take part in a festival speed-dating activity to help match up festivals and bands, our festival in the beautiful pines at the Nevada County Fairground is growing and drawing about 4,000 attendees, and drawing more young people and first-time attendees than ever before.

cont'd on page 4 →



DIRECTOR'S WELCOME

MORE MUSIC!

by Pete Ludé, CBA Executive Director

Winter drew to a close March 20, so we can officially announce the start of festival season. Actually, it started a bit early this year, with CBA's **Sonoma Country Bluegrass & Folk Festival** just a few weeks ago in Sebastopol. The weather was perfect, and the music superb. This one-day event sold out again, attracting fans and pickers from throughout California. You can see a report on all the fun on page three of this issue. There's lots more music soon to come: CBA's annual **Spring Campout** returns to the Lodi Grape Festival Grounds, starting April 14. Once again, we've coordinated with the California State Old Time Fiddle Association who is hosting their 58th Annual Fiddle and Picking Contest on Friday and Saturday, April 17 and 18, at the same location. Just two weeks later is **Sierragrass**—the new festival presented by AJ Lee & Blue Summit, running April 30 to May 2 in Ahwahnee (near Yosemite), followed by the **Parkfield Bluegrass Festival** starting May 8. Then, the **Strawberry**

cont'd on page 3 →

MEMORABLE CAMPOUT MOMENTS

by Ted Kuster, CBA Board Chair

The Spring Campout is coming up, starting Tuesday, April 14. I bet you have a fond memory or two of this weekend away in Lodi. My favorite is the first year the California Old Time Fiddlers Association contest joined us at the fairgrounds. Mark Hogan, a leader in both the CBA and CSOTFA, had the bright idea of combining these two long-standing celebrations at the same place on the same weekend. That first night, after the contest

was settled, fiddlers started wandering around the grounds looking for some fun. Celtic fiddlers popped into old-time circles. Western swing fiddlers made themselves at home among our regular crowd of traditional bluegrass devotees. The cross-fertilization was electrifying. From late evening to early morning, I went from jam to jam hearing something familiar yet entirely new at each one. It reminded me of the first time I walked down Bourbon Street in New Orleans and felt my feet come up off the ground.

Another favorite memory involves wine, but not the way you're thinking. Some years we used to have a spaghetti dinner inside Jackson Hall on Saturday night, with a couple of youth bands and, in the fall, the membership meeting. Bonneau Dickson would bring a couple of demijohns (aka giant bottles) of an excellent vintage of his own making, which he would freely share with the diners. One night a volunteer was getting a little enthusiastic about reaching under the table with a broom, and

one of the bottles toppled to the floor and shattered. Three or four of us rushed to the kitchen for some dry cloths, and several kind souls spent the rest of the evening trying to get the floor back to the color it had been when the dinner began.

What fond recollections come to you when you think about CBA campouts gone by? Write to us with your story at [campout@californiabluegrass.net!](mailto:campout@californiabluegrass.net) Meanwhile, I look forward to picking with you at Lodi very soon! 🐻



Campout fiddle session. Photo by Alan M. Bond.

More info and tickets available here →



BLUEGRASS BREAKDOWN

April 2026 – Festival Preview

The Bluegrass Breakdown is the monthly publication of the California Bluegrass Association, keeping CBA members and the world of bluegrass up-to-date with coverage of CBA events, musicians, promotions, and volunteer opportunities since April 1975. Each issue is published as both a printed and a digital newsletter and distributed to more than 7,500 readers around the world.

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Printed in California by Mailing Systems, Inc.

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JOHN MAILANDER & CAROLYN KENDRICK

by Adam Roszkiewicz, CBA Music Camps Director



We are thrilled to have **John Mailander** back to teach at JFFC this summer! John is a multi-instrumentalist and while he currently calls Nashville, Tennessee, home, he is originally from San Diego, growing up in North Park, not far from JFFC.

He has been a member of Bruce Hornsby and the Noisemakers for several years, while also fronting his own group, John Mailander's Forecast. His playing can be heard on albums by Billy Strings (including the Grammy-winning album *Home*), Noah Kahan, Joy Williams, Lin-Manuel Miranda, Lucy Dacus, Molly Tuttle, Darol Anger, Joe K. Walsh, Chatham County Line, Sam Burchfield, and many more.

One thing you may not know about John is that he is a huge fan of the best-known jam band to come out of Vermont: Phish. Another is that he is a hobbyist mixologist and big fan of Alchemist Brewing, also from Vermont and brewers of the renowned Heady Topper.

John is an experienced educator and has been on the staff of the Puget Sound Guitar Workshop, Augusta Heritage Center Bluegrass Week, and the Swannanoa Gathering, among others. In 2017 he published his first instructional book, *A Fiddler's Guide to Movable Shapes*. John is a graduate of the Berklee College of Music, in Boston, Massachusetts.



Carolyn Kendrick is a Los Angeles-based singer, songwriter, guitarist, fiddler, and producer. And while she has spent time living in Boston, Massachusetts; Austin, Texas; and Nashville, Tennessee; among other music-centric cities, she originally hails from Stockton.

She has played with roots-music luminaries such as Darol Anger, Bruce Molsky, Aoife O'Donovan, Kaia Kater, Hannah Read, Margo Price, The Clements Brothers, and Jacksonport, amongst others. And she has played festivals such as Newport Folk Festival, Grey Fox Bluegrass Festival, and the Savannah Music Festival.

In addition to her career as a songwriter, Carolyn has produced music for the podcasts *You're Wrong About* and *You are Good*. She has also co-produced a new podcast with Tristan Scroggins called *Don't Call Me Darlin'*, a series exploring the 1994–2003 *Women in Bluegrass* newsletter, which created a private space for women musicians to discuss their experiences in the genre.

Her recent album, *Each Machine*, is a collection of traditional and original political folk songs inspired

by her time researching *The Satanic Panic* of the '80s and '90s. These songs are modern, electric re-imaginings of hymns, murder ballads, pagan chanting, and even songs of devil-worship.

Some fun facts you might not know about Carolyn are that she played a concerto for xylophone for her eighth-grade graduation and named her cat "Tony Hawk" because of her love for the Bones Brigade skateboarding team. She also reads poetry every morning under her pomegranate tree.

Carolyn is also a graduate of the Berklee College of Music, and is an experienced educator, having taught at music camps and workshops all over the country. Her songwriting class was very well received last year, and we are so happy to have Carolyn back teaching at JFFC again this summer.

JFFC CONCERTS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Attendance at JFFC's annual spring concerts is part of the package for camp attendees, with tickets available for purchase to the public. The concerts are extremely popular, with a history of selling out each year.

CONCERTS AT 7:30, DOORS OPEN AT 6:30

FRIDAY, MAY 8

Featuring Tyler Grant, Luke Price, Rachael Price, Nina Weisman, and Julian's own Nat Copeland

SATURDAY, MAY 9

Featuring John Reischman, John Mailander, Missy Raines, Carolyn Kendrick, and Tray Wellington

Tickets are \$25 for general admission, \$30 for preferred seating (first few rows), \$10 for age 15 and under. Get more info and buy tickets here →



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MAY 6-10, 2026



WELCOME MESSAGE

cont'd from front page

Spring Music Festival returns to the Nevada County Fairgrounds on May 21–24.

If you're looking to level up your musical skills this year, you can attend the **Julian Family Fiddle Camp** near San Diego on May 6 through 10, or the **CBA Summer Music Camp** in Grass Valley June 14 through 17. Learn more about all of CBA's events at www.CaliforniaBluegrass.org.

As always, the highlight of the summer is CBA's 51st annual **Father's Day Bluegrass Festival** in Grass Valley—you'll find all the details in this month's issue. We have another outstanding lineup of touring and local bands, with over 30 talented

groups performing over the four-day event. This festival is well-known for its extensive youth activities, exhilarating square dances, dozens of free workshops, the midnight hot-dog stand, fantastic arts and craft vendors, a wide variety of food and beverage choices, and non-stop jamming. Our **Father's Day Fair** returns on Sunday morning with even more activities to celebrate Father's Day with your kids, while enjoying some of the best bluegrass and old-time music you'll find anywhere. We'll also have a special performance by the **Black Banjo Reclamation Project** on Friday evening to celebrate the Juneteenth holiday. Early bird ticket pricing is still available, but not for long. And check out our new **Pinetree Partner Pass**—a way to step-up your festival experience with extra perks and

conveniences while partnering with us to support CBA.

This year, we're expanding the **CBA Silent Auction**, with many opportunities to support our non-profit mission by bidding to win fun and unique items. Bidding starts online April 15, so be sure to check it out. New items will be added each week leading up to when bidding closes on June 20 in Grass Valley.

With everything going on in the world these days, having music in our lives, and connecting our community through camaraderie and song is more important than ever. We hope you're able to find the time to join us for some music this summer! 🐻

SONOMA THRILLS

The Sonoma Bluegrass and Folk Festival notched a triumphant 20th year Saturday, March 15, with a bravura set by Laurie Lewis and Nina Gerber capping an afternoon of electrifying performances. Pulso de Barro, the New York-based son jarocho band, opened the day to an enthusiastic reception, and followed it up with a rousing workshop where Sonoma pickers learned this style of clogging and strumming. Local-boy-made-good Josh Gooding brought the virtuosic Five Mile Mountain Road band home from Nashville, and over 100 pickers took advantage of a spectacular spring day to jam on the lawn outside the venue until sore fingers drove them indoors to listen. A high-energy square dance rounded out the evening, with fiddler Karen Celia Heil in command and that very same Laurie Lewis in the guitar chair.

This was the festival's second consecutive sellout show—get your tickets early next year!



Scan for more Sonoma photos →



Jams both big and small sprung up around the venue. Photo by Evan Thompson.



Nina Gerber, left, and Laurie Lewis on stage. Photo by Evan Thompson.



Pulso de Barro's workshop on son jarocho rhythm and dance. Photo by Evan Thompson.



Full house for Jesse Appelman's West Coast Stringband Project. Photo by Evan Thompson.



The day was perfect for outdoor jamming. Photo by Robin Frenette.



Josh Gooding at home on stage with Five Mile Mountain Road. Photo by Evan Thompson.



The square dance was a hit with adults and kids of all ages. Photo by Robin Frenette.



Hot dance band led by Karen Celia Heil on fiddle, Evie Ladin calling. Photo by Robin Frenette.

FATHER'S DAY FESTIVAL ACTS

cont'd from front page



BRONWYN KEITH-HYNES

Bronwyn Keith-Hynes has long been renowned as a prolific instrumentalist, earning two IBMA Fiddle Player of the Year awards as well as a Grammy for her work with Molly Tuttle & Golden Highway. But on her latest album *I Built a World*, the Charlottesville, Virginia, native unlocks an impressive new sound: her voice. Bronwyn has

been a musician since before she can remember. "Apparently, I saw two girls busking on the street playing fiddles when I was three," she explains with a laugh, "and I pointed to them and said, 'I will do that.'" A background in dance makes her a captivating and energetic live performer. An on-stage collaboration with fellow Charlottesville native Dave Matthews taught her how a crowd could feed your energy. And attending Berklee during the early years of its American Roots Music program offered inspiration from classmates like Sierra Hull and Alex Hargreaves—as well as an introduction to Tuttle and most of Bronwyn's Golden Highway bandmates. "*I Built a World* is about daydreaming, about building worlds in your mind. I was definitely a kid who did a lot of that. But as an adult, I feel like music still can take me to that place," she says. She hopes listeners can take a little bit of that dreaminess with them.



CALEB & REEB AND THE CALI CUTUPS

Dust off your boots and gather around for some true and original modern honky tonk music. An all-star cast of master musicians backs these two soul singers of country music, Caleb Klauder and Reeb Willms. These two are known to roots music fans across the globe for their soulful harmonies, driving dance tunes, classic original songs, and commitment to the raw truth of rural American music. They are foundational to the exceptional old-time and country music scene in the Pacific NW with the Caleb & Reeb Country Band and their membership in the Foghorn Stringband, of which Caleb was a founding member. They bring their unique set of talents to the stage with an eye towards good times and an ear towards the deepest songs and tunes. When these two sing together, their honest incantations leave us spell-bound and smiling. The pair bring the spirit of legendary country duos into their contemporary takes on country music. They complement each other strikingly well in an attractive meld of honky-tonk that brushes shoulders with trad bluegrass. Caleb has penned over 50 songs many of which are standards across America in honky tonk and bluegrass jams and festivals.

THE CALIFORNIA BLUEGRASS REUNION



The California Bluegrass Reunion is an annual celebration of California's rich bluegrass tradition, featuring an extraordinary lineup of musicians with deep California roots who have all made significant contribu-

tions to the genre. Bill Evans has been a player, teacher, composer, writer, and historian for over 45 years. A recipient of the coveted Steve Martin Banjo Prize, he is also celebrated worldwide for his innovative original compositions, and enjoys a reputation as an outstanding instructor. John Reichman has been a foundational mandolinist, composer, bandleader, and musical educator in bluegrass and North American roots and folk music since emerging from the vibrant "new acoustic" music scene of the Bay Area in the 1980s. He is a master of multiple genres, with an Old Masters sense of tone, taste and musicality. Chad Manning is a San Francisco Bay Area fiddler who has played with the David Grisman Quintet & Bluegrass Experience and Laurie Lewis, and has shared the stage with J. D. Crowe, Curly Seckler, Alan Munde, and Tony Trischka. Together with his wife Catherine, Chad runs the renowned Manning Music in Berkeley. San Francisco Bay Area native Jim Nunally is a musician, composer, record producer, and teacher—all in addition to being one of the

finest guitar players in the world. His third-generation traditional music roots began in Arkansas with this guitar-playing grandfather who taught Jim's father who in turn taught Jim. This pedigree contributes to his unmistakably traditional sound. You may have seen Sharon Gilchrist playing mandolin or upright bass, singing a traditional ballad, or performing an original piece on a concert or festival stage anywhere in North America. She has performed with the Peter Rowan and Tony Rice Quartet, Scott Nygaard and John Reischman, Darol Anger, Laurie Lewis, Scott Law, and others. Resonator guitarist Mike Witcher has toured and recorded with the likes of Dolly Parton, Dwight Yoakam, Peter Rowan, Bette Midler, The Gibson Brothers, Sara Watkins, and Laurie Lewis. Known for his gorgeous tone and tasteful playing, Mike is one of the most sought-after educators in the world of slide guitar.



DAROL ANGER & BRUCE MOLSKY

Darol Anger and Bruce Molsky they have explored the American roots landscape for almost two decades, including epic collaborations such the Grammy-nominated Fiddlers Four (with Michael Doucet and Rushad Eggleston), performing on each other's concerts and recordings, and finding endless joy in playing music together. Freestyle fiddler, composer, producer and educator, Darol Anger is exceptional among modern fiddlers for his versatility and depth. He has helped drive the evolution of the contemporary string band through his involvement with his Republic Of Strings, the Turtle Island String Quartet, the David Grisman Quintet, The Montreux Band, his duo with Mike Marshall, his current touring group Mr Sun, and others. He is a professor emeritus at the Berklee College Of Music. Described as "an absolute master" by No Depression, Bruce's take on tradition has landed him in collaborations with some of the world's most highly respected players from roots to rock. He is a special guest on legendary rocker Mark Knopfler's CD, *Tracker*. Along with Andy Irvine & Donal Lunny, he is a founding member of the supergroup Mozaik, with three recordings. You can see Bruce on the BBC TV *Transatlantic Sessions* with Aly Bain and Jerry Douglas, and on *David Holt's State of Music* on PBS. Bruce is a visiting scholar in the American Roots Music Program at Berklee College of Music, where he is the go-to authority for the next generation of roots musicians.



HARD DRIVE

From raging fiddle tunes to brother duets, Hard Drive—Tatiana Hargreaves, Sonya Badgian, Aaron Tacke, and Nokosee Fields—brings a sense of deep intuition and silliness to the world that encompasses old-time, country, and bluegrass. They float gently around a Bermuda-Triangle-type spacetime warp in central North Carolina, and they are constantly expanding at the approximate pace of the universe.



MISSY RAINES & ALLEGHENY

Missy Raines is a trailblazer in bluegrass music. On her newest release *Highlander*, the bassist, vocalist, songwriter, and bandleader returns to her bluegrass roots with a musical homage to the peaks and valleys of her native West Virginia. In the early years of her career, Missy spent hours learning from and playing with many first-generation bluegrass legends and traveled extensively throughout the mid-Atlantic region. As a child and young teen, Raines soaked up the sounds of The Country Gentlemen, The Seldom Scene, The Johnson Mountain Boys, and the other neo-progressive groups that propelled bluegrass music forward in the 70s. She brings that intrinsic knowledge of the music to the forefront on her new project—a lifetime spent steeped in bluegrass is on full display on *Highlander*. Beyond the impressive array of guest musicians and the outstanding performances of her bandmates, it's Missy's extensive knowledge of and deep passion for bluegrass music that make *Highlander* a bluegrass album for the ages. And, for this musical adventurer, it's a love letter of sorts to the music and musical community that shaped her. "I love so many different kinds of music," she says. "But I cannot describe how bluegrass affects me, and why it affects me so deeply."



THE PRICE SISTERS

Music has always had a resounding presence in the lives of twin sisters Leanna Price and Lauren Price Napier. Growing up, their parents sang traditional and old-time country songs and as the sisters grew up hearing duet harmony, they naturally became

accustomed to singing together themselves. The sisters are supported by a band of young multi-instrumentalists and vocalists who showcase traditional, yet fresh and innovative sounds. Banjo player Trevor Holder was awarded first prize on the banjo at the prestigious Old Fiddlers' Convention in Galax, Virginia. Bobby Osborne Jr., on bass, started his musical career touring with his father, the late Bobby Osborne of the Osborne Brothers. Conner Vlietstra is not only a talented guitarist and vocalist; he has soloed on the Grand Ole Opry, and is an award-winner on several instruments. The Price Sisters band were nominated for the IBMA Momentum Band of the Year in 2024 and 2019, while Lauren has received nominations for Momentum Vocalist and Instrumentalist of the Year in 2019 and 2020, respectively, and Leanna for Momentum Vocalist in 2020. Presently, The Price Sisters have signed to the Del McCoury Band's family record label, McCoury Music, and released their first album for the label titled *Between the Lines*, produced by Ronnie McCoury, in 2024, after which they made their debut on the world-revered Grand Ole Opry stage.

We profiled the Sam Grisman Project, Broken Compass Bluegrass, the Bluegrass Cardinals, and The Po' Ramblin' Boys on page 3 of the February 2026 Bluegrass Breakdown. You can see all the 2026 FDF bands' complete bios, get your tickets for the big event, as well as stay in the loop on any festival updates, by scanning the QR code here:



FDF ARTIST IN RESIDENCE

SCOTT GATES

Described as a remarkable, fun-loving musician, Scott Gates is yet another dazzlingly talented product of the California bluegrass youth movement. He has been playing mandolin, guitar, and singing hard-core bluegrass since he was 10 years old. Scott has built a large fan base as part of the Get Down Boys, Jeff Scroggins and the Scroggdogs, and AJ Lee & Blue Summit.

As our Father's Day Bluegrass Festival Artist-in-Residence, Scott will be joining some of our featured bands on stage, conducting workshops, headlining a special showcase performance on Thursday, and generally helping out in the jam scene.

CALIFORNIA SHOWCASE BANDS



BAY AREA SPECIAL

Formed in early 2024, Bay Area Special is rooted in traditional bluegrass sound, while bringing their own taste and innovation to the music.

Led by Ruby Davis on rhythm guitar and lead vocals and Elijah Chen on lead guitar, the lineup is rounded out by Phil Cornish on mandolin and vocals, Danny "Hootenanny" Clark on fiddle and vocals, and Ryan Triolo on upright bass and vocals. The band has quickly built momentum as they make their way through the California bluegrass festival circuit. "The group is one of the hottest up and coming bands to emerge from Northern California's thriving bluegrass scene," says Donna Hargis, CBA SoCal regional director.



CRITICAL GRASS

Critical Grass is a collection of East Bay musicians who dig all forms of bluegrass, all of bluegrass's cousins, and great song-

writers. Their repertoire includes everything from Bill Monroe and Flatt & Scruggs top John Prine, Norman Blake, and John Hartford. They also love women songwriters, and songs by Kathy Kallick, Martha Scanlon, and Hazel Dickens are in their setlists. On guitar and vocals is Chris Quale; Jeremy Reinhard is on banjo, vocals, and bird identification. Leah Wollenberg sings and plays fiddle, and

her fellow Dungeons & Dragons nerd John Hauptert plays mandolin and sings. Lee Jones plays bass and wrangles the band. Like the D&D-inspired avatars on their band t-shirt, Critical Grass is on a campaign to spread joy and peace through music.



DEEP THICKET DWELLERS

Deep Thicket Dwellers are a four-piece ensemble with members from Alaska and Virginia, now

based in Oakland. Their music weaves together bluegrass, old time, gypsy jazz, and the playful ingenuity of John Hartford into a distinctive style called "hillbilly jazz." With the fiddle at the heart of their sound, they deliver dynamic, high-energy performances that inspire foot-stomping revelry.



SWEET SALLY

Sweet Sally is an exciting young band celebrated for its exceptional instrumental prowess, tight vocal harmonies,

and inventive arrangements that draw from bluegrass, folk, and jazz. Band members Lucy Khadder and Sophia Sparks started the band as a duo in 2020, and are now joined by Clare O'Grady. Lucy, on fiddle, guitar, and vocals, is a YoungArts Award winner, and twice featured as a Next Generation Jazz artist at the Monterey Jazz Festival. In 2025, she received the Jimmy Lyons Scholarship to study

at Berklee College of Music. Sophia, on mandolin, guitar, and vocals, is a YoungArts Award winner and the 2024 RockyGrass mandolin contest winner. She has been passionate about mandolin since she joined Sierra Hull on stage at age 9, and is finishing her senior high school year in the jazz program at Oakland School for the Arts. Clare O'Grady, on bass and vocals, studies jazz and psychology at UC Santa Cruz and brings an extensive background in percussion and jazz.



THE JIMMY TOUZEL BLUEGRASS EXPLOSION

The Jimmy Touzel Bluegrass Explosion is not your grandpa's bluegrass band—but he'd probably love them

anyway. Born in the San Francisco Bay Area in 2024, this high-energy supergroup is on a mission to shake the dust off traditional bluegrass and make it swing, stomp, and slap. At the helm is Jimmy Touzel, a South Carolina native with a big bass and even bigger stage presence. Evan Ward burns up the banjo, Ryan Breen brings the soul on guitar, Dana Frankel fiddles like it's 1939, and Josh Gooding's mandolin might just catch fire if you're not careful. Together, they mix tight harmonies, wild solos, and a whole lot of fun. Their sound is steeped in first-generation bluegrass but also takes inspiration from old-time, honky tonk, gospel, swing, and 1950s rock 'n' roll. Expect deep cuts, fresh originals, and classics that'll make you shake your booty. 🐻

FREE FDF WORKSHOPS

FIDDLE AND GROOVE

DAROL ANGER & BRUCE MOLSKY

FRIENDLY OLD-TIME JAM

GEOFF & MASHA CRAWFORD

SACRED HARP SINGING

DAVID EISENBROICH & ANDREA TZVETKOV

SLAP BASS MJ FITCH

SCALE SOURCES FOR BANJO

DAVE GUARENTE

GUITAR JOY LOUISE

CLAWHAMMER BANJO

ROWAN MCCALLISTER

MUSIC THEORY FOR BLUEGRASSERS

BILL MCCLELLAN

BLUEGRASS BASS TECHNIQUE

RYAN TRIOLO

VOCAL HARMONY

LUKE WUKMER

... AND MANY MORE TO BE ANNOUNCED!
WORKSHOPS INCLUDED IN ADMISSION

PRODUCTION LEADERSHIP

Internship Program at Father's Day Festival



Our third annual Production Leadership Internship at Father's Day Festival includes interns as part of an expert production team to learn to solve the inevitable challenges of a live event in real time and create a great festival experience over seven days!

LEARN MORE AND APPLY FOR OUR PRODUCTION LEADERSHIP PROGRAM >



On Vern's Stage

by Jim Duber, Vern's Stage Entertainment Coordinator

On behalf of the Vern's Stage Entertainment Committee, it's a pleasure to announce the outstanding slate of bands that our judges selected to perform on Vern's Stage at the upcoming CBA Father's Day Bluegrass Festival. Thanks to all the bands that submitted audition videos. Even though we can't select all the bands that enter, we appreciate the time and effort that goes into the process, and hope that they'll consider submitting again next year.

To determine the bands that are invited to perform our team of expert judges commit their time, expertise, and detailed attention to all the excellent submissions. I appreciate the work they put in to ensure that we have, as always, an excellent lineup of music for everyone at the festival to enjoy.

We have a small number of returning bands—two of whom last appeared on our stage back in 2015: The Crooked Jades and Evie Ladin. Mission Blue, who were last here as a full band in 2019, will also join us. We'll welcome many—14 to be precise—exciting bands that are new to our stage. This year, we have an excellent balance of bluegrass, newgrass and old-time bands. There's something for all tastes.

Check out the full lineup for Vern's Stage at Father's Day Festival in the schedule on page 7.

If you'd like to know more about the bands on Vern's Stage while counting down the days until the festival, just follow the QR code below. You'll find a list of all the bands that have played Vern's Stage going back as far as 2007, with links to the web and social media pages for the 2026 bands to make sure you don't miss your favorite Vern's Stage acts.

Check out the 2026 Vern's Stage lineup, and all the bands back to 2007! →



The Jimmy Touzel Bluegrass Explosion on Vern's Stage in 2025. Photo by Alan M. Bond.

Juneteenth at FDF

Black Banjo Reclamation Project

Friday, June 19 on the Pioneer Stage

The **Black Banjo Reclamation Project** is a creative eco-system curating musical, cultural, and land-based healing opportunities for Black, Afro-diasporic communities around the world to work with the banjo as a tool for reclaiming ancestral wisdom, economic solidarity, and self-determination—paving pathways for restorative narratives to use music as a tool for transforming our world.

Their talk “Exploring Banjo Reclamation as a Pathway to Black Liberation” and showcase

performance commemorating Juneteenth will feature artist and musician **Hannah Mayree**, second-generation African-American percussionist and singer **Kele Nitoto**, Liberian-American banjoist, choreographer, and educator **Tula B. Strong**, singer-songwriter and multi-instrumentalist **Deidra Hall**, and Chicago-based fiddle player and singer-songwriter **Anne Harris**.

You won't want to miss it!
Learn more here →



Black Banjo Reclamation Project joined by Karen Celia Heil at FDF 2025. Photo by John G. Woodworth.

FATHER'S DAY BLUEGRASS FESTIVAL

SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE

MAIN STAGE

THURSDAY, JUNE 18

10:00 am Sweet Sally
 11:05 am Bay Area Special
 12:15 pm Bronwyn Keith-Hynes
 2:20 pm California Bluegrass Reunion
 3:30 pm Hard Drive
 4:40 pm Music Camp All-Stars
 6:50 pm California Bluegrass Reunion
 8:20 pm The Po' Ramblin' Boys
 9:50 pm Bronwyn Keith-Hynes

FRIDAY, JUNE 19

10:00 am Critical Grass
 11:05 am Deep Thicket Dwellers
 12:15 pm Bronwyn Keith-Hynes
 2:20 pm Hard Drive
 3:30 pm The Po' Ramblin' Boys
 4:40 pm Kids on Bluegrass
 6:50 pm The Price Sisters
 8:20 pm California Bluegrass Reunion
 9:50 pm The Po' Ramblin' Boys

SATURDAY, JUNE 20

10:00 am The Jimmy Touzel Bluegrass Explosion
 11:05 am Broken Compass Bluegrass
 12:15 pm The Price Sisters
 2:20 pm Caleb & Reeb and the Cali Cutups
 3:30 pm Darol Anger & Bruce Molsky
 4:25 pm *Honorary Lifetime Membership Awards*
 4:40 pm Kids on Bluegrass
 6:50 pm Broken Compass Bluegrass
 8:20 pm The Bluegrass Cardinals
 9:50 pm Sam Grisman Project

SUNDAY, JUNE 21

10:00 am Missy Raines & Allegheny
 11:05 am Darol Anger & Bruce Molsky
 12:15 pm Broken Compass Bluegrass
 2:20 pm Caleb & Reeb and the Cali Cutups
 3:30 pm The Bluegrass Cardinals
 4:40 pm Missy Raines & Allegheny

PIONEER STAGE

THURSDAY, JUNE 18

1:30 pm Critical Grass
 2:35 pm Deep Thicket Dwellers*

FRIDAY, JUNE 19

1:30 pm Sweet Sally
 2:35 pm Bay Area Special
 4:00 pm Black Banjo Reclamation Project: Historical Seminar
 4:55 pm Black Banjo Reclamation Project Music Showcase

SATURDAY, JUNE 20

12:15 pm The Jimmy Touzel Bluegrass Explosion
 1:30 pm Missy Raines & Allegheny
 2:35 pm Youth Academy Show
 3:40 pm The Price Sisters
 4:55 pm Caleb & Reeb and the Cali Cutups
 6:10 pm Youth Open Mic

SUNDAY, JUNE 21

9:00–10:30 am
 Bluegrass Gospel Jam & Service

VERN'S STAGE

THURSDAY, JUNE 18

12:00 pm Long Forgotten
 12:45 pm The Far Out Johnnies
 1:30 pm Frog Face
 5:15 pm Alan Bond & Skedaddle
 6:10 pm The Rounder Circle

FRIDAY, JUNE 19

12:00 pm The Stoney Mountain Ramblers
 12:45 pm Redwood Flat
 1:20 pm *Bill & Faye Downs Volunteer Awards*
 1:30 pm Significant Otter
 5:15 pm Honey Buckets
 6:10 pm Evie Ladin Band

SATURDAY, JUNE 20

12:00 pm Mission Blue
 12:45 pm Grass Valley Stringband
 1:20 pm *Volunteer of the Year Award*
 1:30 pm Silver City
 5:15 pm Cantara Loop
 6:10 pm The Crooked Jades

SUNDAY, JUNE 21

12:00 pm The New Acoustic Collective
 12:45 pm Lilies of the West

FATHER'S DAY FAIR

SUNDAY, 10AM TO 2PM

Celebrate Father's Day with the kids at our Father's Day Fair! This special festival event will be from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Sunday, June 21. Enjoy an instrument petting zoo, Bubble Mayhem, crafting, balloon animals, face painting, fun games, and much more—and top-shelf bluegrass!

AT VERN'S STAGE



SQUARE DANCE!

WHITNEY PAVILION (Near Vern's Stage)

7:00 pm - no experience needed!

Friday: Hard Drive

Saturday: Darol Anger & Bruce Molsky

KEM BAKER

POWER VOLUNTEER

By Phoebe Leigh-Suelflow, CBA Volunteer Coordinator

If you see Kem Baker at the festival, it will probably be at a late-night jam, where he'll be singing and playing his guitar. Or he could be quietly listening to a band. However, you will see his handiwork all over the fairgrounds. In fact, we couldn't be putting on the festival without him. Kem is the coordinator of our Power Team, formerly called the Electrical Crew, and he is a key person in making the magic happen.



Kem has been leading our flagship festival's electrical work since we came back from the pandemic. However, his affiliation with bluegrass music goes back much farther: His father played the guitar, and his grandfather gave him a Kay guitar when he was 8 years old. He started playing guitar at church, where he ended up playing electric guitar for 20 years. However, he was always fond of bluegrass music. In high school, when he got his first car he put in an 8-track tape player. While his schoolmates were listening to hard rock, Kem was listening to bluegrass. His first tapes were the Stanley Brothers, the Osborne Brothers and other bluegrass favorites. Kem says another reason he listened to so much bluegrass music was because he found these 8-track tapes for cheap on the sale racks, so they were really cheap.

Later on, he got deeper into bluegrass with his father-in-law, "Red" Kidwell, who used to play with Vern Williams. "Red" played the fiddle at barn dances, and tried to get Kem involved. Along the way, Kem hit it off with Keith Little and they started playing together with Kem on guitar and Keith on banjo. But Kem had a young family and couldn't get weekends off, so he had to make a choice between music and his livelihood, church, and family responsibilities. He says that he didn't play guitar for 30 years.

Over the years, Kem had a busy career as a stationary engineer. These are the professionals who operate, repair and maintain stationary

equipment—like boilers, turbines, ventilation systems, motors, and heating and cooling systems in a building—and make our work environments run smoothly. He worked for several companies, including Kaiser, where he picked up the skills that he uses at the festival today.

When Kem finally retired, he thought he'd like to see what the festival was about. He volunteered and, as they say, the rest is history.

Kem's team starts out early on the Friday before the festival. As soon as the CBA gets access to the fairgrounds, he and his crew start putting together the equipment that has been stored away since the previous festival. The first thing that gets done is setting up the kitchen for Steve Shabry and his crew at Blue Sun Catering to start feeding the Summer Music Camp participants at breakfast on Saturday morning.

Then Kem and the team take it easy for a few days while the camp is going on. Then, on the Tuesday before the festival when the VIP tents get set up next to the main stage, the Power Team goes to work. They run the wires and power for the stage, and across the field for the vendors. Then there is lighting to put up and ventilation fans to get in place. Volunteers hang what seems like miles of rope lighting around the fairgrounds. All of this needs to be done before the shows start on Thursday morning. Once this surge of work is complete, it's smooth sailing for the team until the end of the festival. Still, Kem is on call with a radio, and he and another crew member remain available to handle any electrical emergencies.

Kem is always recruiting people for his team, and reminds me that you don't have to be an electrician to be on the Power Team; if you have ever put up Christmas lights, or plugged in an extension cord, you can handle the job. All of the lights and electricity are plug and play these days. There are some jobs that require getting up on a ladder, but there are just as many jobs that don't, like hanging lights on the fences. In the past, when the electric power grid was near the Lions Lake, setup required a lot of heavy labor and electrical expertise, but that has changed. Now, the Power Team is a great team to be on because you can work pre-festival, and get in your hours in say, two six-hour shifts. Then you can just relax and enjoy the festival.

Kem and the Power Team especially need help Sunday afternoon. That's when everything has to be taken down, rolled up, and put away—and in a very short time! The music on the Main Stage goes until around 5 p.m.—then there is a dash to get everything done before dark so that it can be moved out the next morning.

We're grateful to have Kem as part of the CBA community: as a picker and a volunteer! 🐾



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THE GOODINGS

A MODERN BLUEGRASS FAMILY

by Jon Hartley Fox for the Bluegrass Breakdown

Bluegrass is family music. Everybody says that—fans, promoters, musicians, festival vendors, bluegrass writers and so on. With the Father's Day Festival right around the corner and the annual Kids on Bluegrass program ready for another year, it seemed appropriate to focus on a family that has been deeply involved with the CBA's Youth Program. That road led us to Vacaville and the Gooding family: Dave and Theresa and their three sons, Joshua, Jacob and John.

Dave Gooding was born in Bakersfield into an Army family and lived in Arizona, Germany, and elsewhere before ending up back in California. He joined the Air Force after high school and logged some time in the Far East. When his service ended at Travis Air Force Base outside Fairfield, he decided to stay in the area. He's been in Vacaville for 40 years.

He was working on a construction job in Dixon when he met a young woman named Theresa Behr, who was tending bar in the tiny town of Elmira while working on a master's degree from UC Davis. Romance bloomed ... eventually. Their first date was at the Palms in Davis, a wonderfully ramshackle music venue, where they saw Peter Rowan with Rob Ickes.

A friend told Dave about this great bluegrass festival in Grass Valley, so

he went to his first Father's Day Festival in 1994 and was immediately hooked. He soon began volunteering for the CBA and has worn many hats for the organization, mostly connected with the FDF. He's served as the stage manager, Vern's Stage coordinator, ice-wagon driver, festival emcee, entertainment coordinator and countless other jobs.

He served on the CBA board for a dozen years, with one year as chairman, but has stepped away in recent years because he "didn't want to be that guy who says, 'That's not the way we've always done it.'"

A bass player, Dave's performing credits include an early stint with Donner Mountain—with a young Annie Staninec—and 15 years with the Central Valley Boys. He's also emceed at several festivals besides the FDF, including Lake Havasu, Plymouth, Susanville, the Sonoma Folk Festival, and others.

A retired union pipefitter, Dave is somewhat of a bass broker; he always seems to have a line on one. He also occasionally provides a bass for bands touring the area but not traveling with a bass.

Theresa Behr Gooding has been the president of the CBA since 2019, a job she characterizes as being the liaison between the CBA board and the

association's members. A native of Michigan who grew up in Southern California, Theresa came from a musical family who had big sing-along jams she calls "hootenannies." She says she plays a bit of guitar but only "when no one else is around."

After earning an undergraduate degree in philosophy and religion from Syracuse University, she returned to California and entered graduate school at UC Davis. A 30-year career with Wells Fargo recently ended, but she stresses that "she's not working, but not retired." She's currently mulling over her options.

Theresa has worked as the backstage manager at the FDF since 2018.

"I'm extremely passionate about volunteering for the CBA," she says, "because it's built some of the best relationships I've known. I've met some of the best people from every walk of life.

"I got my kids involved in Kids on Bluegrass early, not because I had any thought of them being performers or anything like that. They just loved it. So, most of my first volunteering for the CBA was with the Youth Program, just helping out wherever the kids were.

"The great thing about KOB for my kids was the relationships, not just with other kids but also with adults. It

gave them a whole set of friends their own age who loved the same kind of music they did. It was a community that gave them a sense of belonging. Something I really love about my boys being out there in the rest of the country is that they love to talk about their experiences of growing up with bluegrass in California and the KOB. They're very proud of that."

Oldest son **Josh Gooding**, 28, is one of the most gifted and creative mandolinists of his generation, and surely one the most humble and grateful young musicians on the planet. He currently lives in Elizabethton in eastern Tennessee.

Josh started his professional career with the Blue J's, which included his brothers Jake and John and banjo player Jesse Personeni. After high school, he went to Humboldt State for two years, where he studied botany and then classical viola. He transferred from there to East Tennessee State University in Johnson City, Tennessee, to study in that school's celebrated bluegrass and country music program.

After leaving ETSU, Josh worked with David Peterson & 1946, the Alex Leach Band and then the Little Roy & Lizzy Show. "Little Roy Lewis is one of the coolest people I've ever got to be around," says Josh. "I've learned so much from him. He's really one of



From left: Theresa Gooding, Chad Manning, and Dave Gooding after awarding Chad the CBA Lifetime Membership. Photo by John G. Woodworth.



John and Josh Gooding, left to right, perform in a Tribute to Frank Solivan at FDF in 2024. Photo by David K. Cupp.

the last remnants of true vaudeville entertainment. He hearkens back to a different time.”

Josh stays busy these days, splitting his time between three bands: the Jason Carter Band, led by the fiddler best known for his long tenure with the Del McCoury Band; Five Mile Mountain Road, a country-bluegrass-hillbilly band that includes the phenomenal banjo player, Trevor Holder; and the Bays Mountain Cut-ups, a traditional bluegrass quartet that includes three former members of Seth Mulder & Midnight Run.

“My favorite thing about Josh’s playing,” says banjo ace Trevor Holder, “aside from his insane musical ideas and incredible technicality, is his consistency. I’ve never seen or heard anybody consistently get such a beautiful and present tone out of a mandolin.”

“In the context of Five Mile Mountain Road, whenever we need somebody to inject some energy, provide top-notch backup or carry the show with some great hillbilly music he is always right there. To me, he is the ‘icing on the cake’ the five of us made before he joined the band.”

Josh is proud of the work of the KOB and of the group of musicians who have gone through the program who now have thriving careers as professional musicians. “I think KOB really put us ahead of the curve,” says Josh. “KOB taught us how to carry ourselves, with a sense of confidence and pride and a sense of respect for the music, the audience and the craft of performing. We learned the nature of collaborating with people.”

Middle son **Jake Gooding**, 26, is a musician, just not a professional one like his brothers Josh and John. Jake opted for the world of education and the life of a high school history teacher. He currently resides in the Bucks County village of Quakertown, Pennsylvania, about 50 miles north of Philadelphia. He lives in a 220-year-old farmhouse that’s been in Theresa’s family for generations.

After getting an undergraduate degree in history from Desales University, he entered graduate school at the University of Pennsylvania; he will receive his master’s degree in education in May. He’s working

full-time now as a substitute teacher, but plans to have a permanent teaching job by the time schools start in the fall.

Before going off to college, Jake played bass in 35 Years of Trouble and the Blue J’s. Like his brothers, Jake participated in both the CBA’s and the IBMA’s KOB program. All three of them also took private lessons from Matt Dudman.

“I love KOB,” Jake says. “Some of my most important memories growing up come from there. It was the independence they gave us, the confidence they instilled in you, the social interactions, the opportunities that opened up. It created a community for us. When I think about who I am and the way I am, KOB comes up time and time again.”

Jake keeps his bass chops up playing with friends and recently took up the guitar. His most recent professional gigs have been playing bass in the pit orchestras for musicals put on by local theater groups. The most recent was *Pippin*. “I really love doing musicals,” he says, “because you get to play so many styles of music during the show.”

“I love teaching,” he says. “Last year, when I did my student teaching and had my own class for the first time, it was great, getting to know the students, planning lectures, preparing lesson plans and all of it. It just feels right.”

Youngest son **John Gooding**, 24, now lives in eastern Tennessee near Gatlinburg and is the guitarist in the Po’ Ramblin’ Boys—a job he’s held since October 2024. A proud graduate of KOB, he played in several bands before leaving California, including Windy Hill, 35 Years of Trouble, the Blue J’s, North Country Blue and Crying Uncle Bluegrass Band. After moving, but before hooking up with the Po’ Ramblin’ Boys, he spent a few months, along with brother Josh, with the Little Roy & Lizzy Show.



Frank Solivan with a young Josh Gooding.
Photo by Lyle Dixon.

C.J. Lewandowski, the mandolin-playing leader of the Po’ Ramblin’ Boys, couldn’t be happier with his new guitar player. “John is a one-of-a-kind gem with confidence and kindness as his allies, and California should be very proud of him,” he says. “What I love about John’s guitar style and singing is how uniquely and unforgivingly ‘him’ he is. He’s not afraid to be himself, and I love that. The Po’ Ramblin’ Boys have gained a new energy since John joined us. Since the very first show with us, John has done nothing but his best, and I truly appreciate him more than I can say.”

John is a staunch advocate of the CBA’s KOB program. He says it taught him about much more than music, and that the lessons drilled into him by the late Frank Solivan, the driving force behind KOB, have stood him in good stead in his adulthood.

“Frank knew,” says John, “what the crucial things were to teach kids trying to play bluegrass. When I was a kid and Frank would go on and on about these things, I’d wonder why he kept driving these things home. And then you get out there in the world and

cont’d on page 13 →



Jake Gooding on bass at FDF 2024.
Photo by John G. Woodworth.

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Bluegrass Celtic OldTime Russian Swedish Baltic

THE GOODINGS

cont'd from page 11

try to do this for a living, you're thrown together with people who never learned those things and it all makes sense. I owe Frank a lot."

When not on the road with one of their bands, Josh and John also work playing bluegrass music at Smoky Mountain Distillery, a corn whiskey—aka moonshine—distillery with locations in Gatlinburg and Pigeon Forge. It's a typical tourist attraction kind of gig: five hours a day, five 30-minute sets a day, with a half-hour on stage and a half-hour off. "I am very thankful for that job," says John, "because I feel that kind of steady work for bluegrass musicians is pretty few and far between."

The Gooding family will be out in force at the upcoming FDF. Theresa will be managing the backstage area. John will be performing on stage with

the Po' Ramblin' Boys. Jake will be emceeding at the Pioneer Stage. And Dave and Josh will be here, there and everywhere, doing what one does at the festival. 🐻



Theresa and Dave Gooding. Photo by Robin Frenette.

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APRIL 2026

BLUEGRASS BREAKDOWN

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CALIFORNIA BLUE GRASS ASSOCIATION

FATHER'S DAY

BLUEGRASS FESTIVAL

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JUNE 18-21
2026

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NEW! PineTree Partner Pass		Includes full festival pass, and lots of extras. See above for details.			\$725	QTY.	Total
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SINGLE DAY	THU. 6/12	\$50	\$50		\$25		
	FRI. 6/13	\$75	\$75		\$35		
	SAT. 6/14	\$85	\$85		\$40		
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FESTIVAL CAMPING Starting noon 6/11	TENT (or class B van)		QTY.	RV (class A or C)		QTY.	
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	Arrive Mon. 6/9	\$60			\$75		
	Arrive Tues. 6/10	\$30			\$40		

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Make check payable to California Bluegrass Association, and mail form and payment to: CBA Festival
3739 Balboa St. #5090
San Francisco, CA 94121-2605 TOTAL ENCLOSED:

QUESTIONS? CALL CBA AT 844-BLU-GRASS (844-258-4727)



Please share questions, suggestions, or story ideas at breakdown@californiabluegrass.net



FESTIVAL PREVIEW

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Main Stage at 2025 Father's Day Festival.
Photo by Robin Frenette.



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Monthly Trivia Quiz

By Bert Daniel, Breakdown Contributor

Back in February, we observed Presidents' Day with the question: "Name the fiddler who toured with Bill Monroe and claims kinship with 85 percent of the signers of the Declaration of Independence."

Speculation included Gene Lowinger, Benny Martin, and Kenny Baker, but only author and bass wizard **Bill Amatneek** knew that the name we were looking for was **Randall Franks**.

This Appalachian entertainer and multi-instrumentalist has a fascinating biography, and his kinship to notable figures extends past the vast majority of the signers of one of the United States' most important founding documents to include many notable figures in American and world history: George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Davy Crockett, Sergeant Alvin C. York—as well as Scotland's Robert the Bruce and England's King Henry VII.

As a fiddler, Randall says he was influenced by the likes of Gid Tanner of The Skillet Lickers, The Dillard's, and Flatt & Scruggs. Bill Monroe, however, holds a special place in his memory. "I will never forget the first time that Bill Monroe called me up on stage, at the Dählonega Bluegrass Festival, to fiddle with him," he told *Georgia Entertainment* back in 2022. "That changed my

life, as I went from just another teenage fiddler with a band to someone that every musician and every audience member witnessed; the Father of Bluegrass acknowledged me as talented enough to stand on stage beside him. When he later brought my band to the Grand Ole Opry, the climb up the ladder of success became more like a ride on an escalator."

For his correct answer to this month's question, Bill wins a copy of JD Rhynes' collectable cookbook *JD's Bluegrass Kitchen*.

APRIL TRIVIA

For April, we're getting fired up for this summer's Father's Day Festival. So, we want to know: **Who designed the first CBA Father's Day Bluegrass Festival Poster?**

Send your answer to:
trivia@californiabluegrass.net
no later than April 30.

This month's prize is a lighted CBA jamming hat—perfect for the all-night jams at Grass Valley!

Only CBA members are eligible to win; if there is more than one correct response, the prize winner will be selected at random. The winner will be announced in the June 2026 issue of the *Bluegrass Breakdown*.