BLUEGRASS BREAKDOWN
Preserving and growing bluegrass, old-time, gospel, and traditional music in California since 1974
Nov/Dec 2026

Introducing the 2026–2027 CBA Board of Directors

by Jason Dilg, Bluegrass Breakdown Managing Editor

Following CBA's 2026 election, returning directors Ted Kuster, Lani Way, Phoebe Leigh-Suelfow, Robin Frenette, Andrea Zelones, Karen Celia Heil, and Tyler Stamets will be joined by Dave Reynolds and Devin Wilcox for 2026-2027.



Dave Reynolds. Photo by Alan M. Bond.



Devin Wilcox. Photo by Alan M. Bond.

The current regional director for CBA's Northern Lands region, **Dave Reynolds** knows the power of live music to foster in-person connections and build community in rural areas. After a career with the National Park Service, Dave started hosting bluegrass and Celtic programming at Davis's KDRT-FM, and opening his home to touring musicians performing in the area. He later moved to Mount Shasta in Siskiyou County and started the McCloud River Music series and Shasta Mountain Music, a nonprofit bringing world-class musical talent to the Mount Shasta community. They're now into their fourth year of music production, and Dave serves as the executive director.

Devin Wilcox is the mandolin player for the Rancho Cucamonga-based band the Honey Buckets, and brings more than 30 years of business management experience, a love of bluegrass, an open mind, and desire to work together in service of the CBA community to help it thrive. He says his calling is building community through bluegrass jamming—and the proof is in the pudding, as they say. He's hosted the Honey Buckets' jam camp at festivals and events, creating a welcoming space for everyone—including beginners and those with no exposure to jamming culture—to experience what's unique and magical about bluegrass. "Collaboration between associations is needed for effectiveness in our mission, and I work to build those relationships throughout the West," Devin said.

Nearly 20% of our members weighed in for our annual election—about double the required number.

Did you know that our board meetings are open to all CBA members? They are generally held online at 6 p.m. on the third Sunday of the month; some board meetings are held in-person at selected CBA events. Please contact any board member if you would like to attend. Find out more at **https://californiabluegrass.org/cba-board.**



DIRECTOR'S WELCOME

A SEASON OF GRATITUDE

by Helen Foley, CBA Executive Director

This is my first welcome as CBA's executive director, and I'm glad it lands in our holiday issue, because gratitude is what I feel most right now. I'm grateful to the board for its vote of confidence and to all of you for more than 50 years of building something worth taking care of. I promise to give this role my very best, and I hope to meet many more of you soon, whether at a jam, a campout, or a festival gate.

You'll find gratitude all through these pages. At the Fall Campout, Joanne Minasi and a crew of volunteers kept the fun rolling, right down to frying bacon for our first annual pancake breakfast. Michael Vann tells how an afternoon under an oak tree with Carl Pagter set his brother Mark on the path to cofounding Leftover Salmon. We

cont'd on page 2 →

SOUTH STATE 48: GET IN ON THE FUN NOV. 5–8 IN CARLSBAD

Don't miss this great Southern California jamming weekend—South State 48 at the Carlsbad by the Sea Hotel.

Enjoy free themed jams and expertly led workshops all weekend, and picking around the clock. You don't have to have a room to join the fun!

Friday night is the band contest, with the winner opening the Saturday night ticketed South State 48 Showcase concert with Ettore Buzzini and Faultliner.

FREE WORKSHOPS AND JAMS

FRIDAY 11/6 WORKSHOP SCHEDULE

Noon: **Band Lab** - Joy Louise & Keith Little
1pm: **Spectrum Bluegrass** - Mel Biesecker
2pm: **Fiddle Workshop** - Joe Baxter
3pm: **Harmony Singing** - Joy Louise & Keith Little
2pm: **Guitar Workshop** - Joy Louise

SATURDAY 11/7 WORKSHOP SCHEDULE

11am: **Your Heart & Soul** - Grow the Grass
Noon: **Beginner Banjo** - Jeremy Ott
1pm: **Songwriting & Music Biz** - Joanne Ledesma
2pm: **Advanced Banjo** - Ettore Buzzini
3pm: **Intermediate Mandolin** - Matt Bruno

FRIDAY 11/6 - JAM TENT SCHEDULE

10am: **Welcome Jam** - SDBS, Mark Pullin
11am: **Family Friendly Jam** - Keith and Aria
Noon: **Hot Dog Pickle Jam** - The Passing Fancies
1pm: **Jamgrass Anonymous** - Electric Grass Land
2pm: **Country Gentlemen Jam** - BanjerDan
3pm: **Dolly Parton Tribute Jam** - Whole Hog
4pm: **Fast Jam - all welcome** - Honey Buckets

SATURDAY 11/7 - JAM TENT SCHEDULE

10am: **Warm-Up Jam** - Dog Park Jam, Phoebe & Gary
11am: **Beginner Friendly Jam** - San Diego Bluegrass
Noon: **Bluegrass & Beyond** - Catch & Chord, Arizona
1pm: **Open Jam** - Eric Pittman & Mark Shutts
2pm: **Trad Grass** - Ted Kuster & Regional Directors
3pm: **Fiddle TOONS: Old-Time** - Double Knot
4pm: **Challenge Jam** - Jambusters with Matt Bruno

Tickets are still available for the Saturday night Ettore Buzzini & Faultliner concert! Support these incredible young musician by purchasing your tickets now:

BLUEGRASS BREAKDOWN
Nov/Dec 2026 – Holidays

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.*

Helen Foley, CBA Executive Director and Editor in Chief
Jason Dilg, Managing Editor
Gina Dilg, Layout and Art Editor
Susan Bartholomew, Copy Editor

EDITORIAL CONTRIBUTORS

Bert Daniel
Jon Hartley Fox
Donna Hargis
Phoebe Leigh-Suelflow
Jody Richardson
Adam Roszkiewicz

PHOTOGRAPHY CONTRIBUTORS

Alan M. Bond
Bob Calkins
Ella Carter-Klauschie/Lodi News-Sentinel
David K. Cupp
Ray Edlund
Bob Free
Robin Frenette
Mike Melnyk
Jean Ramos
Evan Thompson
John G. Woodworth

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Contact us for advertising, story ideas, or other information at breakdown@californiabluegrass.net

3739 Balboa St. #5090
San Francisco, CA 94121-2605
(844) BLU-GRASS (844-258-4727)

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WELCOME MESSAGE

cont'd from front page

remember Jeanie Poling, who spent more than 20 years helping San Francisco pickers find their footing. And we celebrate two milestones: 40 years since Laurie Lewis's first solo album, and 30 years of the Kathy Kallick Band.

My thanks goes out to everyone who voted in our elections this year, too. Our board election closed on October 10, and nearly 20% of our members cast a ballot—about double what's required for a valid election. Please welcome our new board members, Dave Reynolds and Devin Wilcox. Members also approved our updated bylaws with 95.7% of the vote, the first update since 2017. You'll find the details below.

There's plenty to look forward to. **South State 48** returns to Carlsbad November 5–8 with free workshops and curated jams, plus a band contest whose winner opens the Saturday night showcase with Ettore Buzzini and Faultliner. In January, we head back to the Bakersfield Marriott for the **Great 48 Jam**, January 14–17, with Rhonda Vincent & The Rage on Saturday night. The camp you know as Julian Family Fiddle Camp is now the **Julian Music Camp**, with a new home at Camp Stevens, May 19–23; registration opens November 1. And the Father's Day Bluegrass Festival returns to Grass Valley June 17–20, with member presale tickets starting December 1.

None of this happens without you. If you're grateful for the music the CBA has brought into your life, as I am, I hope you'll consider a year-end gift. You'll find lots of ways to give on page 15, and gifts made by December 31 are tax-deductible for 2026. You can even plan a legacy gift that keeps the music playing for generations.

From all of us at the CBA, thank you for another amazing year. Happy holidays, and we'll see you down the trail.



Outgoing Executive Director Pete Ludé, President Theresa Gooding, and incoming Executive Director Helen Foley at the Annual Membership Meeting. Photo by Alan Bond.

ELECTIONS: CBA'S 2026 BYLAWS UPDATE WINS BIG

A lot has changed in the world of nonprofits, and within CBA, since we last changed our bylaws back in July 2017—so the board unanimously recommended that we consider some updates.

This requires a vote by members, so we put proposed changes to a vote this year, along with the election of our 2026–2027 board members. When the ballot closed October 10, the updated bylaws were approved by members with an overwhelming majority of 95.7%!

The main updates:

- Board member terms extended from one year to three years.
- One-third of (rather than all) board seats will be up for election each year.
- Board members may serve two three-year terms, then must take at least one year off.
- A board seat may be filled by appointment with a two-thirds vote of sitting board members. At least two-thirds of the board seats must be elected by members at all times.
- An explanation of the Executive Director role.
- Use of electronic communications and meetings, such as Zoom, are clarified.
- Updates to fully conform with current California nonprofit law.

For the complete CBA bylaws, visit our website at CaliforniaBluegrass.org

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

CARL PAGTER'S IMPACT—AND LEFTOVER SALMON CONNECTION

In the summer of 1974, my family traveled from out of town to the National Mall in Washington, D.C., for the annual Smithsonian Folklife Festival. While we explored several exhibits, we spent most of our time listening to the many musicians jamming across the grounds.

One day, my parents, my older brother Mark (11), and I (8) came upon a large oak tree where a group of fantastic musicians were swapping tunes. People drifted in and out as they wandered between circles. Mark heard the banjo for the first time played by a man wearing a thick brown leather hat. He moved in close, stuck his nose right near the man's banjo, and stared for hours, totally engrossed in the sound. When it was time to leave, my parents had to gently peel him away, promising to return the next year.

On the way home, Mark declared, "That's what I want to do." After some convincing, my parents relented and bought him a banjo.

The following year, he had practiced relentlessly and was ready to return to "the tree" to play alongside the man in the brown hat. Attached is a photo from July 1975 of Mark jamming with that musician, who turned out to be Carl Pagter.

Carl's playing sparked a total obsession with an instrument that was rare in our circles at the time. Mark turned that childhood inspiration into a lifelong career as a professional banjo player and cofounder of Leftover Salmon.

Mark sadly passed in 2002, but looking back at this picture, I was deeply saddened to hear of Carl's passing as well. I wanted to share this story to highlight how deeply Carl impacted others and helped fuel the love of bluegrass that sparked a wave of contemporary interest decades later.

Best Regards,

Michael Vann

As we prepare for the holidays, this letter is a great reminder of how grateful we are for the CBA and the inspiration that led our founders to its creation more than a half-century ago. The real beauty of a music community is its power to change the lives of people for the better. This holiday season, we're grateful for your participation in our CBA community—as members, volunteers, musicians, instructors, students, jam hosts, fans, and friends. We look forward to your continued support in 2027, and wish you the happiest of holidays! —Eds.



A young Mark Vann, center, picking on the National Mall with CBA cofounder Carl Pagter, in his familiar leather hat. Photo courtesy of Michael Vann.

CALIFORNIA BLUEGRASS ASSOCIATION
BLUEGRASS ENTERTAINER ARTIST RELIEF
BEAR FUND

Help us support musicians through injury or illness

Give to the BEAR Fund

Learn more about the BEAR Fund and donate here

Save Those Used Gift Cards for KidFest!

Did you know one of the most popular activities at KidFest during CBA's Father's Day Festival is making picks from spent gift cards? Save yours, bring them to the festival, and drop them off at the KidFest area. They'll get upcycled into flatpicks for kids!





REMEMBERING JEANIE POLING

by Jody Richardson



Chuck and Jeanie Poling at 2026 Father's Day Festival. Photo by Robin Frenette.



Jeanie at the Turlock campout in 2011. Photo by Jean Ramos.

The California bluegrass world was blessed to receive Jeanie Poling's powerful contributions for as long as we did. Although she lived with cancer for several years, her passing on August 26 seemed sudden for those of us that loved her.

Jeanie's grace, strength, and lust for life was a through line—she seemed practically invincible in the face of incredible health challenges. "Jeanie's been so brave and so tough through[out] that I guess a lot of us figured she could fight off everything," her husband, Chuck, said.

Jeanie approached music with pure joy. She didn't have the hangups that ego and self-doubt bring to so many of us musicians. She lived in the reality that a relationship with music could be simple, and dang if it felt good then let's keep on doing it!

Perhaps it was that her gorgeous singing voice came so naturally, or that she knew her power as a community builder. All I know is that the twinkle in her eye when she was doing what she loved and the music was thriving was a reward beyond words.

Her generosity of spirit was not confined to her own music making, but was reflected in her outspoken appreciation for the music of others. As hosts of the Plough and Stars bluegrass jam for over 20 years and monthly local showcases that gave many SF bluegrassers their start, Jeanie and Chuck were a pair whose reputation preceded them.

Jeanie cultivated a vast array of musicians who are more determined and confident in themselves for having been touched by her, beyond what she even knew. She will be truly missed.

Facebook was filled with tributes of Jeanie after Chuck shared of her passing:

"She filled the city with song" —Scott Bloom

"Jeanie was always on it, capably jamming on guitar and or bass and delivering beautifully voiced songs - always with a smile on her face." —Ted Silverman

"May Jeanie's love of music, sweet harmonies, care and realness, live on in all of us." —Jee-Hee Haar

"Jeanie was so talented in her own right, but also did so much to build up the talents of others." —Nicole Solis Snider

PICKING, GRINNING, AND PIZZA AT JUG BAND COFFEE JAM

by Donna Hargis, SoCal Regional Director

There's a little corner of Long Beach where once a week the sound of banjos, guitars, and mandolins spills into the night, drawing in a passer by or two who have never heard live banjo before. Welcome to Jug Band Coffee, a cozy corner on Broadway and Temple where a few folks are playing bluegrass every Wednesday, mostly for their own enjoyment—but also to spread their love of bluegrass.



Picking at the Jug Band Coffee Jam. Photo by Donna Hargis.

Luke Wukmer and I created this jam because we wanted a jam close to home. Now there is a small group playing traditional bluegrass for anyone that wants to listen or join in. Some new and old friends have gathered, including seasoned bluegrass pickers and some had never played bluegrass before. The grinners are also a mixed bunch of folks who just happened by or heard there was bluegrass in Long Beach. A community has emerged.

A lot of the credit goes to Thomas and Vanessa, the owners of Jug Band Coffee. They have generously opened their coffee and pizza shop to live music and community gatherings, giving us a place to make a little joyful noise every week. The jam is always free, and their delicious pizza is discounted to just $3 for a generous slice. Their pizza is, unsurprisingly, wildly popular.

In addition to the weekly jam, we've held concerts on the third Wednesday of the month for two years now, featuring the Silver Linings. It is worth a trip to hear the great harmony singing with Dennis Fetchet on the fiddle, Brian King on mandolin, Jim Shank on banjo, Alper Akture on bass. We've also welcomed wonderful guest performers including Joy Louise, Keith Little, Foxfire, and many more. We've held workshops where people can learn new skills, songs, and techniques. We even had a visit from the Miraleste Bluegrass Club, bringing a flock of teenage pickers and their parents into the shop. Watching these young musicians play alongside adults, swap songs, and simply be part of a musical community has been pretty special. The fun and music never stops, and it is a good idea to follow "Jug Band Bluegrass" on Instagram to be aware of the schedule and special events. But any Wednesday that you stop by, you are sure to hear bluegrass!

If you decide to join us, leave your screens at home. You can pick up an instrument yourself, sing along, meet someone new, or just sit with a latte and listen. Live music needs places to live, and communities need places to gather. Jug Band Coffee has given us both. Long Beach is a little richer for having a place where you can get a great slice of pizza, a good cup of coffee, and live bluegrass.

CALIFORNIA BLUEGRASS ASSOCIATION

JULIAN MUSIC CAMP

SINCE 2011

FAMILY · COMMUNITY · FIDDLES AND MORE

REINTRODUCING

JULIAN MUSIC CAMP!

by Adam Roszkiewicz, CBA Camps Director

As recent readers of this publication know, change is in the air at CBA! This is also true of the Julian Family Fiddle Camp, which has been renamed the Julian Music Camp. One of the most common questions we've been asked over the years has been "do you teach other instruments besides fiddle?" The answer has always been a resounding "Yes!"

Over the last decade-plus the Julian Family Fiddle Camp has offered world-class instruction in not just fiddle, but also guitar, mandolin, bass, vocals, songwriting, banjo, and even spoons! So, we've changed the name to something that better represents what the camp is.

What is not changing is the quality of instruction, the format, or the good vibes. This year we have an excellent lineup of new and returning instructors: Luke and Rachael Price will be back teaching fiddle and vocals, respectively; the great Vickie Vaughn return to teach bass; Tyler Grant is teaching guitar; Carolyn Kendrick is teaching songwriting; and Ben Krakauer will be returning to teach banjo after a couple years away. We are also very excited about two new additions to the JMC instructor roster: Ida Winfree will be teaching intro to flatpicking guitar, and Ethan Setiawan will be teaching mandolin.

But wait, there's more! In addition to our new name, JMC will also be at a fabulous new location, and slightly later in the calendar. Because of scheduling conflicts with other CBA events, site availability, and our desire to not have the camp conflict with Mother's Day—you're welcome, everyone—we went looking for a new site to host the camp. Boy, did we find a great one!

This spring, JMC will be held at Camp Stevens from May 19–23. Camp Stevens is situated on 256 acres of pine-oak woodland, offering scenic overlooks and miles of hiking trails. The main campus is easily walkable, and features a large lawn, pool, and volleyball court. Within a short walk of the central campus, along with great hiking trails you'll find an outdoor chapel, labyrinth, tree house, wood-burning cob oven, chicken coop, orchard, and two gardens. The accommodations at Camp Stevens are also modern and comfortable, with Wi-FI, cozy meeting spaces, and fully stocked coffee and tea bars.

Meals are made from scratch on-site from sustainably sourced and local ingredients, including, as often as possible, eggs from their own on-site chickens, fruits, vegetables, and herbs from the 3 acres of gardens and farmland.

Additionally, Camp Stevens is about a 5-minute drive from historic downtown Julian, making trips to town, or the choice to stay off-site during camp much more convenient.

We are so excited to bring the Julian Music Camp to Camp Stevens in 2027 and explore the new space together with all of you!

Registration for the 2027 camp is open now! To register or learn about the Julian Music Camp, the instructor lineup, and our new location go to JulianMusicCamp.com or scan here:



Tyler Grant, John Reischman, and Missy Raines perform at JFFC 2026. Photo by David K. Cupp.



Trey Wellington teaches banjo at JFFC 2026. Photo by David K. Cupp.



The traditional flash jam in downtown Julian. Photo by David K. Cupp.



WATER TOWER RETURNS TO WARPED

by Jason Dilg, Bluegrass Breakdown Managing Editor
Photos by Robin Frenette.

As a major rock festival, bluegrass might not be the first thing you think of when you think of the Van's Warped Tour. But Southern California's Water Tower will appear for the sixth time at Warped November 14 and 15—this time in Orlando, Florida—following their July appearance at the Long Beach installment of the tour in July.

The band's first Warped Tour gig was playing at the event's front gates. They got their foot in the door after Nick Hexum of the band 311 recommended Water Tower to Kevin Lyman, who founded the Warped Tour in 1995, Kenny said. "Kevin was like, yeah, let's try it," Kenny added. "He loved us."

In spite of the Warped events being much bigger than, say, the CBA Father's Day Festival, Kenny said the events have some things in common. "Everyone's there to celebrate their love of music and community. And it's different because, well, for one, Warped's 80,000 people, so it's a little bigger. And it's louder."

Another thing Warped Tour has in common with the bluegrass community is that it has become multigenerational over its 30-plus years. "I was talking to Kevin just the other day about bringing a kid's section out, because now there are so many elder emos who have kids. There were a lot of children there."

Landing on Warped Tour is a kind of full-circle experience for Kenny, who grew up listening to punk music. "It was always part of the plan," Kenny said. "I started pitching Kevin when we did a record with Mike Herrera from MXPX in 2010," he recalled. Warped Tour wasn't ready for bluegrass yet, but Kenny had faith. "My belief is everybody loves bluegrass—they just don't know it yet. So we're here to remind them," he said.

With five appearances already under their belt, the sheer size of the event and many of the faces they encounter are getting to be more familiar to the group. "Our first time, we were pretty nervous just because it was so loud, and we're there with our condenser mic opening for some pretty big acts on the acoustic stage," Kenny said. "We had a few fans out there for us the first couple times, but now we have a Warped fan base of people with mohawks and super-alternative-looking folks who absolutely love it, and were in the first square dance that they'd ever done—with us."

You read that right: "Square dance." At Warped Tour.

Kenny calls impromptu square dances from the stage. Playing off of punk shows' "wall of death," where fans line up in groups opposite each other before somewhat violently charging into one another, Kenny created the "wall of love." "Everyone was in a big circle, and I called: 'Run over to the other side and hug somebody,'" Kenny said. "They were loving it. You see a bunch of people with mohawks—who may have just gotten out of a mosh pit—and people who you might see at a bluegrass concert all running to hug each other."

We've been hearing rumors of an uptick in what Kenny called "alternative-looking folks" poking around SoCal bluegrass jams and concerts lately. Is there a crossover happening?

"Yeah, I think there were about 10 kids who we met at Warped Tour who came to [the Long Beach Bluegrass Festival in July], and some of them stayed for the square dance," Kenny said. "They're just like, 'this is such a cool community—I had no idea this existed, or that this was so cool.' A lot of people were like, 'I had like no idea that this music was cool.'"

Water Tour changes up their setlists a bit for the Warped Tour scene from what they might play at a bluegrass festival. "We make it more trad punk when we're at the Warped Tour ... Instead of "Angel Band," we're doing "First Date," from Blink-182, "When I Come Around" by Green Day, or classic Rancid and NOFX songs everybody there can sing along with," Kenny said.

There are some bands that share the Warped Tour stage that Kenny said the CBA crowd might enjoy. Larry and His Flask are something like an American version of Celtic punk's Flogging Molly. Kenny also recommends Amigo the Devil. "It's amazing songwriting and banjo ... so it's a nice gateway," Kenny said.





Water Tower opens for ska/punk band Reel Big Fish on December 4 at the Garden Amphitheater. You can get tickets here:



Get ready for a great—and cushy hotel-comfortable—weekend, January 14–17, when bluegrass pickers and grinners will gather at the Bakersfield Marriott at the Convention Center. Some of them will get a head start by taking Amtrak, boarding from different stops along the San Joaquins line and jamming on the train! Starting Thursday, Jan. 14, you can take part in—or simply enjoy watching—jams all around the hotel. You can expect two or three jams going on in the lobby at all hours, in hotel rooms and near the elevators on the 24-hour jamming floors, in the CBA 9th floor suite, and in the suites of the many regional bluegrass associations including Southwest, North County, San Diego, Central Coast, and Central San Joaquin regions.

Get more info on this GREAT event, and get tickets by scanning here:

THE GREAT 48 RAFFLE: YOUR WRISTBAND COULD WIN YOU A GUITAR

The Great 48 keeps getting even greater with this year's Gibson Starburst Studio raffle!

You're automatically entered with one raffle ticket included with the purchase of your event wristband—and you can up your chances to win by buying more ticket. They'll be available all weekend long! The winner will be announced at the Saturday night concert.

A striking piece of modern Gibson history, the 1992 Gibson Starburst Studio was handcrafted at the renowned Bozeman, Montana, facility during a golden era of Gibson's acoustic innovation. With premium stage aesthetics and a comfortable, fast-playing design, this instrument is a highly collectible find!

The Starburst series was produced for a short time in the early-to-mid 1990s, making them increasingly difficult to find today. Its label verifies that this was the first instrument processed in its production batch on September 15th, 1992—adding a unique provenance for collectors.

The '92 Starburst was built entirely in Montana—where Gibson relocated all flat-top production in 1989—and benefits from the meticulous bracing and build quality that revived Gibson's acoustic reputation in the 1990s.

This guitar features a comfortable jumbo body with a sharp Florentine cutaway and the body is wrapped in a sleek, black lacquer finish; the perfect backdrop to make the ornate mother-of-pearl star inlays along the fretboard and headstock pop.

Designed primarily as an acoustic-electric stage guitar, it is outfitted with an active, factory undersaddle pickup system engineered to minimize feedback and deliver a crisp, balanced acoustic tone through a live PA system or amplifier.



SATURDAY NIGHT AT GREAT 48: **RHONDA VINCENT & THE RAGE!**

As is now our tradition at the Great 48, on Saturday night of the event CBA is teaming up with Guitar Masters for a show you don't want to miss—Rhonda Vincent & The Rage!

A CBA favorite for her high-energy stage performance and epic Father's Day Festival campground jams, Rhonda is a constant force at the top of the bluegrass charts. This fall is no exception, with singles on both the Bluegrass Today Weekly Airplay Chart and the Bluegrass Unlimited Top 30.

The Wall Street Journal called her "The New Queen of Bluegrass," and one night with Rhonda Vincent shows why. The Grammy winner and Grand Ole Opry member brings her powerhouse voice, mandolin, and her award-winning band The Rage to Legends Event Center in Bakersfield on January 16 for an evening of blistering picking, tight harmonies, and heartfelt songs that run from hard-driving bluegrass to classic country. Opening the stage will be this year's Father's Day festival Artist in Residence Scott Gates.





Laurie Lewis. Photo by Robin Frenette.

CELEBRATING HISTORIC MILESTONES IN 2026

LAURIE LEWIS AND KATHY KALLICK

by Jon Hartley Fox



Kathy Kallick. Photo by Alan M. Bond.

Laurie Lewis and Kathy Kallick—old friends, occasional musical partners, Grammy Award winners and honorary lifetime CBA members—are two of the most acclaimed acoustic musicians of their generation. Each celebrated a significant career milestone in 2026: the beginning of Laurie Lewis's solo recording career with *Restless Ramblin' Heart* in 1986 and the formation of the Kathy Kallick Band in 1996. The two women have collaborated on several recordings and shared a Grammy in 1997 for their contributions to *True Life Blues: The Songs of Bill Monroe*.

Forty years ago, in 1986, Laurie Lewis found herself at a crossroads. She had already performed and recorded with such groups as the Arkansas Sheiks, the Phantoms of the Opry, the Good Ol' Persons, and Dick Oxtot's Golden Age Jazz Band. Laurie had formed a bluegrass band with bassist Beth Weil called Grant Street String Band in 1979, but that promising quintet broke up shortly after releasing an outstanding album in 1983. She was working at a violin shop in Marin County, repairing and selling violins and contemplating life as a part-time musician doing an occasional weekend gig. Free weekends pretty much vanished after Laurie bought the shop in 1980 and began working even longer hours.

She had written several songs by then and had a desire to hear them played and recorded by a band—the way she heard them in her head. It was to be a kind of final fling before she hung up her fiddle and bow and became a full-time business owner. She decided to make a "vanity record" and asked Tim O'Brien of Hot Rize to produce it.

"It was through the recording process of that album," she said, "and hearing those songs come alive and dedicating myself to the music, even if only for a few days. I just said, 'You know, I'm done with that shop. I don't wanna do it. I just want to play music.'

"My songs tend to be very personal, and in the recording process, it was like stripping away all my emotional armor. I was laid bare by the whole thing and I just loved it. I felt like I was alive and I wanted to keep feeling that."

The recording, obviously much more than a vanity album, contained several songs that would become mainstays of Laurie's repertoire over the years, including "Restless Rambling Heart," "I'm Gonna Be the Wind," "The Maple's Lament," and "Green Fields." The album also included a few well-chosen covers—Cousin Emmy's "Bowling Green," Jimmy C. Newman's "Cry, Cry Darling", and Tim O'Brien's "Hold to a Dream." Laurie was joined on the album by a handful of musicians, including O'Brien, Markie Sanders, Kate Brislin, Mark McCornack, Greg Townsend and Sally Van Meter. The album, *Restless Rambling Heart*, was released in 1986 on Flying Fish.

Laurie started writing songs while in the Good Ol' Persons, an all-female band she cofounded in 1975 with Kathy Kallick, Barbara Mendelsohn, Dorothy Baxter, and Sue Shelasky.

Laurie had realized that Kathy Kallick owned the songs she wrote and sang while she herself borrowed songs from others. She determined to fix that and is today one of the most respected and admired songwriters in acoustic music. "I think writing is my best form of self-expression," she said.

Restless Rambling Heart found its audience, and the record's success encouraged Laurie to stick with her music. That debut album launched a career as a recording artist that has produced more than 20 outstanding albums over four decades. Her discography includes solo records: *Love Chooses You*, *True Stories*, *Seeing Things*, *Blossoms*, *Skippin' and Flyin'*, *One Evening in May*, *and Laurie Lewis*, *Freight '98*, *Trees*, and *O California*; duet records with Kathy Kallick: *Sing the Songs of Vern & Ray*, *True Stories*; and with Tom Rozum: *The Oak and the Laurel*, *Together*, *Winter's Grace*, and *Guest House*.

The music on Laurie's solo albums and the ones she's done with Kathy and Tom have drawn from old-time country, contemporary folk, and modern country music. But the beating heart of her music has always been bluegrass. "I love everything about bluegrass," she enthused. "I love playing in a band. I love the power of a band. I love everything happening. I love trio and quartet harmonies. I just love it all."

Her love for bluegrass comes through loud and clear on the albums she's done with her bands Grant Street, the Bluegrass Pals, and The Right Hands: *Singin' My Troubles Away*, *Laurie Lewis and Her Bluegrass Pals*, *The Golden West*, *Live*, and *The Hazel and Alice Sessions*.



Laurie Lewis & The Right Hands at Berkeley Bluegrass Festival in 2025. Photo by Bob Free.



Tom Rozum and Laurie Lewis, Sonoma Bluegrass Festival, 2009. Photo by Mike Melnyk.



L-R: John Reischman, Kathy Kallick, and Bethany Raine, FDF 2015. Photo by Bob Calkins.

The International Bluegrass Music Association (IBMA) has twice named Laurie its Female Vocalist of the Year, in 1992 and 1994. She also won the Song of the Year award in 1994 for her recording of "Who Will Watch the Home Place." Her shared awards include Album of the Year and Recorded Event of the Year in 1997 for her and Kathy Kallick's contributions to *True Life Blues: The Songs of Bill Monroe*; Recorded Event of the Year for *Follow Me Back to the Fold: A Tribute to Women in Bluegrass* (2001); and Collaborative Recording of the Year for *The Barber's Fiddle* (2020).

Laurie Lewis could have had no idea in 1986 that she was beginning an award-winning career as a recording artist that would last for 40 years (and still counting). Her body of recorded work is varied and expansive, and impressive in ways both profound and subtle. *Sing Out!*, the venerable folk music magazine, has hailed Laurie Lewis as "one of the leading lights of American acoustic music, a genuine national treasure." Back home in California, we've known that for years.

Just as Laurie Lewis had a decade earlier, Kathy Kallick found herself at a crossroads as 1995 was coming to an end. The band she had spent the last 20 years performing and recording with had just ended its run. She had recorded a handful of solo albums, so working as a solo act was always an option—as were joining an established band or helping to start a new band. In the end, she decided to take the big step up to being a bandleader fronting her own group. Turns out that was the right decision.

The Kathy Kallick Band has been a mainstay of the California bluegrass scene for 30 years. During that time, the band has maintained a lofty position of musical prominence due to outstanding original material, dazzling instrumentalists, Kathy's distinctive lead vocals, and the band's hard-to-believe longevity and musical consistency.

The award-winning singer, songwriter, guitarist, and band-leader Kathy Kallick was born in 1952 in Hyde Park on the South Side of Chicago and raised 45 minutes north in Evanston, Illinois. Kathy headed west in 1973 to attend the San Francisco Art Institute, intending to be a painter who made music on the side. Exactly the opposite happened.

By the time she formed the Kathy Kallick Band in 1996, Kathy had logged twenty years with the Good Ol' Persons—a band she cofounded—recorded several solo albums and won a Grammy Award. The original version of the Kathy Kallick Band included Avram Siegel on banjo, Tom Bekeny on mandolin, and Amy Stenberg on bass. This line up stayed together 10 years and recorded a pair of albums. By 2010, Kathy and Tom were joined by Annie Staninec on fiddle, Greg Booth on banjo and Dobro, and Dan Booth on bass. Renowned bassist Cary Black replaced Dan Booth in 2012. That's still the line-up of the band.

This is a band that has weathered remarkably little turnover during its 30 years together: one guitarist, one mandolinist, two fiddlers, two banjo players and three bass players. As Ray Edlund, a longtime bluegrass DJ on KPFA in Berkeley, noted, "Kathy picks her musicians well. She knows what sound she wants, and she gets it."

"I learned a lot about leading a band," said Kathy, "from my years of being married to Butch [Waller, leader of High Country, Kathy's husband from 1975-91]. He was my mentor. He fed me a lot of bluegrass information. I watched him lead a band and all that went into it."

The Kathy Kallick Band has recorded seven critically acclaimed albums: *Walkin' In My Shoes*, *Live Im Haus Der Kultur*, *Time*, *Foxhounds*, *Horrible World*, *The Lonesome Chronicles*, and *Between the Hollow and the High-Rise*. Outside of the band, she's recorded several solo albums, including *Matters of the Heart*, *Use A Napkin (Not Your Mom)*, *What Are They Doing Heaven Today*, and *Call Me A Taxi*. She's also recorded a pair of albums with old friend Laurie Lewis: *Sing the Songs of Vern & Ray* and *True Stories*.

The latest release out of the KKB camp is a country record; *From the Apple Tree* by Kathy Kallick & the Windfalls, is a bit of a stretch for all concerned. While not billed as a Kathy Kallick Band album, Tom, Annie, Cary and Greg all play on the album. The Windfalls are Kathy's two daughters, Juniper Waller and Riley Thompson.

Juniper and Riley joined the KKB on stage at the 2022 CBA Father's Day Festival and got together with mom for a rousing trio on "The Wild Side of



Kathy performs at 2022 Father's Day Festival with daughters Juniper Waller and Riley Thompson. Photo by Bob Free.

LAURIE LEWIS & KATHY KALLICK

cont'd from page 9

Life/It Wasn't God Who Made Honky Tonk Angels." That was so much fun, they decided to make an album. *From the Apple Tree* is a country album, drawing from such great writers and singers as Wanda Jackson, Loretta Lynn, Skeeter Davis, and John Prine, as well as three of Kathy's original songs, "Red Shirt," "Pretend You're Mine," and "Easy Substitute."

"Kathy's a wonderful band leader," said fiddler Annie Staninec, who joined the band in 2008. "I always feel very much respected and appreciated by the way she treats us and takes care of us. She's extremely considerate about everyone's needs, she always makes sure we're taken care of financially, and makes sure travel and accommodations are comfortable.

"She's a prolific songwriter, but a very democratic leader. She always asks for our input on a song she's written, and I feel like her songs really develop during band practices as everyone contributes and discusses ideas for arrangements." Annie added, "I think that's a big reason we have a unique sound. A lot of the original material comes from her, but the sound develops due to the specific personnel, because everyone brings their own influence, and it shows in each song."

Tom Bekeny, the jazzy mandolinist who has played alongside Kathy for 30 years, agrees with Annie, saying, "As a bandleader, Kathy is generous. We feel valued, and I think it's important to her that we stay happy and satisfied in our music-making. Aside from her wonderful singing, the best thing about playing in the Kathy Kallick Band is working with a bandleader who writes such great original material—material that covers a lot of ground from straight-ahead bluegrass to more folk-influenced singer-songwriter-oriented songs. It's rewarding to have a hand in bringing these songs to life and getting the first crack at interpreting them on the mandolin."

"My style of leading a band," explained Kathy, "is to constantly consult with everybody and get everybody's input all the time. It's completely egalitarian; everybody has a voice. Everything is collaborative. That said, there are times when I have to be the bandleader and do things that don't really come naturally to me. But that's not often because everybody is as into this band as I am. There is no weak link in this band. It's really pretty easy."



Kathy Kallick and Laurie Lewis at 2025 Sonoma Bluegrass and Folk Festival. Photo by Robin Frenette.

Beat the Winter Blues

WITH

ONLINE JAMMING

by Phoebe Leigh-Suelflow, CBA Vice President, Volunteers

Some days it's just hard to get in the car and go to a jam. It may be rainy or cold. Or you may have a headache. Or have just half an hour to spare. So what do you do to keep from going through Jam Withdrawal Syndrome—"JaWS"?

Let technology come to the rescue! Imagine Door Dash for jammers; you can let Jamkazam or one of the other online jamming platforms help you satisfy that need to jam by bringing the jam to you!

WHEN THE MUSIC (ALMOST) STOPPED

My husband, Gary, and I got involved in on-line jamming during the COVID pandemic when we couldn't get together to jam. Outdoor gatherings were cancelled and our Saturday morning group, the Long Beach Dog Park Bluegrass Jam, stopped meeting. Instead, we started a Zoom weekly social check-in at the same time on Saturday. But jamming on Zoom is not an option if you want to play together.

To understand why Zoom didn't work, you need to understand latency. Latency is the lag between the time another musician plays something and when you hear it. If latency is too high, you can't play together. Sound travels roughly 1 foot per millisecond (ms). That means if someone is jamming 10 feet away from you, it takes the sound 10 ms to get to you. We've found that once the latency becomes more than 30 ms, it becomes difficult to play with other people. You are out of sync with the other players and they are out of sync with you. Since Zoom considers less than 150 ms a good quality call, that won't work.

Many of us were looking for something that worked. We heard from a friend about an online jamming group that had been started by Larry Kernagis in Nashville. Larry is an instructor with the Wernick Method jam instruction program. When the pandemic hit, Larry and Pete Wernick discussed what they could do. Like us, they tried Skype, Zoom, and Messenger and found they didn't work—too much latency. Larry pushed on and found Jamkazam. To try it out, he put some students on Jamkazam, and when it worked, he set up an ongoing bluegrass jam that took place every day at 6 p.m. Central Time (4 p.m. Pacific Time). It was a big success—bluegrass jammers flocked to the sessions. We got the equipment and signed on. It was great! We got to know people from all over: Rita, a banjo player from Georgia who owned a peanut farm, some country singers from Canada, a guitar player in New York. We traded songs. We learned

"To understand why Zoom didn't work, you need to understand latency"

"Bonaparte Crossing the Rhine." One of my songs, "Amelia Earhart's Last Flight" became one of Larry's favorites. The group played 10–12 songs in an hour, and everyone was invited to lead a song—or just turn down their sound until they felt confident enough to join in.

One of the Californians in the group was Don Hergert, a bass player. As the pandemic subsided and Larry became busy with his Wernick classes and camps, and touring with his band, Don agreed to take over as moderator. Don now sends out invitations and serves as the group's technical guru. If you're not set up right, your latency can upset the session for the entire group, so Don educates everyone on how to set up their computer and internet connections. The group is still meeting today.

GETTING IN SYNC: THE LATENCY CHALLENGE

Latency on the Jamkazam online platform generally stays below 30 ms, which is amazing when you're jamming with someone from Georgia. So how do the online jamming platforms get around the latency problem? I'm not a technical person and I'll talk about Jamkazam, which I've used for six years and know best. But there are others.

There are three main sources of latency: audio processing, internet transit and jitter.

Audio processing latency is the time it takes your hardware to translate the analog audio signal from your instrument or voice into a digital audio signal that the computer can process, plus the time for the other musician's gear to receive it, translate the digital to analog, and play it through their headphones. Your computer has built-in hardware to do this, but it is just too slow. That is why you need to hook everything up to a fast external audio interface. A basic one will cost $100–$200, or you can spend more if you want more goodies or want to plug more things into it.

Internet transit latency is the time it takes your digital audio data to move across the internet from you to the other musicians. Normally traffic goes through a distant corporate cloud server. Jamkazam and others like it use peer-to-peer and server-based internet connections to decrease latency. They may also use raw uncompressed audio streaming to speed things up. It also helps if you have fast upload and download internet rates.

Finally, there is jitter. Jitter is interference, which disrupts the steady flow of your digital audio packets. You can't get that smooth flow with Wi-Fi, so you need to connect your computer into your home router using an Ethernet cable. Hard-wiring keeps the stream of data moving more reliably.

WHAT YOU NEED TO GET STARTED

Putting it all together, you will need an external audio interface, a microphone and stand, headphones, your computer, an Ethernet cable, and the Jamkazam app. Once you have this, it takes less than five minutes to get set up, reboot your computer, and get on Jamkazam. The cost for Jamkazam starts at $5 per month. Compare that to what you would spend on gas and windshield time.

If you send less data, this will improve your latency. If you don't have to send video, the amount of data that gets sent is smaller. We don't use video, although Jamkazam allows for video sessions. There are times to use video, however. When Larry Kernagis teaches individual lessons, he uses Jamkazam with video. However, one advantage of not using video is that you can jam in your jammies. No need to get dressed up!

THE DOG PARK JAM GOES DIGITAL

We started our own Dog Park Jamkazam during the pandemic and six years later, we continue to get together two times a week for two hours. We all live within about 20 miles of each other, which is another way to keep the latency low. We use Luke Abbot's Strum Machine app to provide the bass to keep us together. We run this in through the audio interface, just as we would with a voice or instrument. Jamkazam allows our group to post charts with words and chords so we can have those in front of us when we jam. It's a great way to learn new songs and try out new techniques.

With everything we do, our latency is well below 30 ms.

FINDING YOUR ONLINE JAM COMMUNITY

Online jamming is also a community. You don't need a regular group to jam with. Open jam sessions are posted online. There will be notes giving you information about the jam, such as: "bluegrass jam," "need banjos," or "no bagpipes." Friends can also send you invitations to future sessions they're planning. It's a good way to meet people, and keep up your skills in the dark, potentially lonely months of winter.

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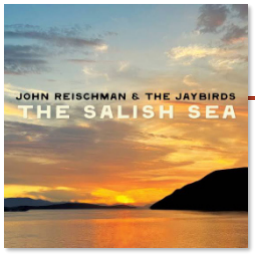
Stravaig spring concerts with Music Director Caroline McCaskey.

sfscottishfiddlers.org

2026 RELEASES

MIGHTY FINE BLUEGRASS AND OLD-TIME MUSIC FROM CALIFORNIA

There's no shortage of great new music from California—and California-connected— bluegrass; this past year has been a busy one for our favorite artists. Here is a look at the freshest albums and EPs from the last 12 months.



The Salish Sea
John Reischman & The Jaybirds

This December 2025 release from Good Ol' Person, California Bluegrass Reunion regular, and CBA camp instructor stalwart John Reischman features original instrumental music— including the title track, which was developed from a FreshGrass concerto commission—and traditional Appalachian songs.



When Night Falls
Sweet Sally

This December 2025 release from the band who was 2026 Father's Day Festival opening act features the Oakland trio of Lucy Khadder, Clare O'Grady, and Sophia Sparks blending bluegrass instrumentation, songwriting, and vocal harmonies. Choose from the nine-track Bandcamp edition or the five-track streaming EP.



Live From the Yukon
Sweet Sally

Fifteen tracks from Sweet Sally recorded at the June 2025 Kluane Mountain Bluegrass Festival in Haines Junction, Yukon.



Magic Accident
Della Mae

This collection from this in-demand national act includes the fiddling powerhouse and longtime director of the CBA Youth Academy, Kimber Ludiker.



Where We Go
Jesse Appelman

The Oakland mandolinist's solo debut mixes bluegrass, old-time, and contemporary acoustic music. Produced by John Mailander; collaborators include Sami Braman, Emily Mann, Eli West, Allison de Groot, AJ Lee, Laurie Lewis, Kathy Kallick, and Mike Witcher.



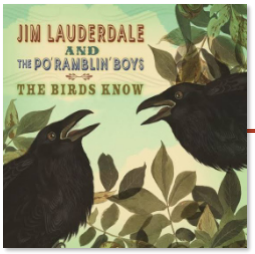
Rare Company
Rare Company

The Bay Area trio of Garrett Massman, Nat Hendel, and Ian Kelmartin debuts with 11 originals. Bluegrass instrumentation—guitar, mandolin, Dobro, and bass—with creative songwriting, close harmonies, and touches of swing.



Sing Me Alive
I'm With Her

Twenty bluegrass-adjacent tracks from the 2025 tour of the trio that includes Southern California born-and-raised Sara Watkins; "Ain't That Fine" was recorded at the Mondavi Center in Davis.



The Birds Know
Jim Lauderdale & the Po' Ramblin' Boys

Jim's decade in Los Angeles during a formative period in Southern California's country and roots-music scene isn't this recording's only California connection; 2026 Father's Day Festival favorites the Po' Ramblin' Boys—with Northern California's John Gooding on guitar—perform 11 new Lauderdale songs written especially for this collaboration.



Riding Roosters
Evie Ladin

The Oakland musician's latest of three Rooster offerings focuses on clawhammer banjo duets. Fiddle, cello, mandolin, guitar, and dulcimer performances expand the palette of this project that Evie says grew partly from playing with Judy Hyman when she was in town for the Berkeley Old Time Music Convention.



Mike Marshall Sings Bluegrass
Mike Marshall

A rare vocal-laden release from the longtime Bay Area instrumentalist. Mike sings and plays all the instruments—mandolin, guitar, banjo, mandocello, and bass—on 13 selections including "Ginseng Sullivan," "Rank Strangers," and "Steamboat Whistle Blues."



The Unsung Adventures of Punch Brothers
Punch Brothers

SoCal native Chris Thile and NorCal native Brittany Haas—and the rest of the Punch Brothers—team up for the group's first entirely instrumental album, and its first with Brittany. This progressive bluegrass/new acoustic offering combines eight originals with three traditional arrangements.



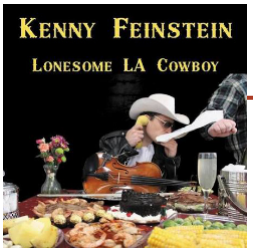
Bluegrass Women
Lindsay Lou

Ten songs celebrating women songwriters in bluegrass, with California-connected contributors including Laurie Lewis, Molly Tuttle, and Brittany Haas.



So Long Little Miss Sunshine (Acoustic EP)
Molly Tuttle

The Palo Alto-raised Grammy-winning guitarist, singer, bandleader, and songwriter revisits five songs from her 2025 album in acoustic arrangements that showcase her bluegrass chops and clawhammer guitar.



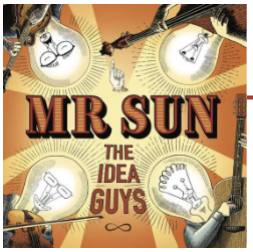
Lonesome L.A. Cowboy
Kenny Feinstein

Kenny's debut solo recording features arrangements that blur the lines between traditional bluegrass, old-time fiddle tunes, and classic country songs—along with his hallmark punk sensibilities— give the record a feel of being both out-of-time and ultimately accessible. Contributors include Michael Daves, Ron Stewart, Jake Eddy, Josh Gooding, Carter Eddy, Josh Shillings, and Beebs.



Porchlight
Two Runner

Nevada City's Paige Anderson (Anderson Family Bluegrass) and Emilie Rose offer 12 originals with coproducer Oz Fritz. Banjo, fiddle, and guitar connect the music to old-time and bluegrass—the drums, pedal steel, and fuller arrangements also bridge into Americana feels.



The Idea Guys
Mr Sun

Bay Area fiddle pioneer Darol Anger with Joe K. Walsh, Grant Gordy, and Aidan O'Donnell on 10 pieces—nine by band members and one by David Surette—adding another chapter to Darol's explorations at the intersection of bluegrass, jazz, and contemporary string-band music.



Cover to Cover
AJ Lee & Blue Summit

The Santa Cruz band's 11-song covers collection draws from Bob Dylan, Sheryl Crow, Emmylou Harris, and others, with guests including Jerry Douglas, Lindsay Lou, and Trey Hensley.



Welcome to the Club
The Po' Ramblin' Boys

This 12-track collection mixes traditional bluegrass with honky-tonk, including steel guitar and percussion on selected tracks. California guitarist John Gooding sings lead on the title song; C.J. Lewandowski's "Coachella Moon" tells a story of romance in the California desert.



The Ninth of July
Butch Waller

The longtime leader of California's High Country presents 13 tracks, mostly original compositions, rooted in Bill Monroe's mandolin style. The supporting cast, drawn from Northern California's bluegrass community, includes Matt Dudman on guitar and bass, Butch's brother Bob Waller on guitar, Tom Bekeny on fiddle, as well as Sandy Rothman, Larry Cohea, Keith Little, Avram Siegel, Victor Skidaneko, Paul Shelasky, and Jim Mintun.



THE 2026 FALL CAMPOUT



The Friendly Ghosts in concert. Photo by Alan M. Bond.



The Recording Truck in action at Fall Campout.
Photo courtesy Ella Carter-Klauschie/Lodi News-Sentinel



Handmade shirts from The Friendly Ghosts. Photo by Robin Frenette.



Joyce Hennessey with Chris Gathard of the Steamup Symposium. Photo by Robin Frenette.



Campground jam. Photo courtesy Ella Carter-Klauschie/Lodi News-Sentinel

by Helen Foley, CBA Executive Director

As the temperature at the Lodi Grape Festival Grounds climbed past 100 degrees, Campout Director Joanne Minasi stepped into the festival showers fully clothed, then walked straight back to work. That set the tone for our Fall Campout: hot days, cool jams, and connecting with friends old and new amid our beautiful musical ruckus. Joanne had "competing stereos" at her own tent with kids jamming on one side, grown-ups on the other, playing different songs in different keys at different tempos. And she wouldn't have had it any other way.

We shared the fairgrounds this year with the National Steamup Symposium, and the live-steam railroaders quickly became friends. Joyce Hennessey led two train song jams, and campers learned a thing or two about steam engines. Saturday's Annual Membership Meeting opened with the Friendly Ghosts—Casper Klein, 11, and Josiah Lampel, 12—who called friend after friend up to join them for a fabulous hour of music.

Our first annual Saturday pancake breakfast started in a kitchen without a single pot, bowl, or fork. Volunteers grabbed supplies, improvised, fed a crowd, and made the magic happen. That was the week in a nutshell. Only one volunteer was scheduled for gate shifts, yet the gate was never empty. All Joanne had to say was "I need ..." and someone showed up. "A successful campout," she said, "is when everyone comes together to make it go right."

We could say the same thing about CBA. We hope you'll join in on the fun at the Spring Campout!

See more photos from Fall Campout, scan here:



Pete Ludé recognized for his work as CBA executive director by CBA President Theresa Gooding. Photo by Alan M. Bond.



Train songs jam hosted by Joyce Hennessey. Photo by Robin Frenette.

Keep the Music Playing

SUPPORT CBA THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

This time of year, we're especially grateful for the people who make the CBA what it is. For more than 50 years, you have kept bluegrass growing, and none of it happens by accident. It happens because people like you choose to give.

Because the CBA is a nonprofit, your gifts are tax-deductible—and every dollar helps keep events affordable, brings young players into the circle, and preserves the bluegrass and old-time traditions we love. Whether you have $10 to give or a legacy to plan, there's a place for you, and we hope you will consider the CBA this year-end.

Gifts made by December 31 count toward your 2026 taxes!

Ways to Give

Make a Year-End Gift
A one-time donation is the simplest way to support everything the CBA does.

Shop the CBA Store
Give a holiday gift that will make your friends jealous at the next bluegrass event.

Fund a Scholarship
Help a student who couldn't otherwise attend music camp.

Donate a Vehicle
Donate a car, truck, boat, or motorcycle, running or not, with free pickup.

Give from Your IRA
If you're 70½ or older, a gift straight from your IRA may count toward your required minimum distribution.

Give the Gift of Membership
Know someone who's almost hooked on bluegrass? A CBA membership might be the push they need.

Sponsor an Event
Underwrite an event and put your business in front of a community that loves to support its own.

Donate an Instrument
That instrument in your closet could be a kid's first through our Instrument Lending Library.

Give Stock
Donating appreciated stock directly to the CBA may let you avoid capital gains tax while making a larger gift.

Leave a Legacy
Name the CBA in your will, trust, or beneficiary designations.

Make a gift today by scanning the QR code, or learn more about all the ways to give at californiabluegrass.org/support. If you have any questions, reach out to Executive Director Helen Foley at giving@californiabluegrass.net.

Support CBA's end-of-year fundraising here:

Holiday Gift Ideas from the CBA Shop











Find the perfect gift for bluegrass lovers at shop.californiabluegrass.org

BLUEGRASS BREAKDOWN

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

Nov/Dec 2026





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Above: Kendall Thompson shows off her CBA hat and holiday ornament. Photo by Evan Thompson.

BLUEGRASS BREAKDOWN
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SAVE THE DATE!



MEMBER PRESALE TICKETS AVAILABLE DEC. 1



By Bert Daniel, Breakdown Contributor

In our mandolin issue back in September, we ventured into a well-known bluegrass-adjacent, mandolin-heavy genre that must be near and dear to many of you judging from the responses: Opera. We asked readers to **"name the opera in which a mandolin accompanies the baritone for an aria of seduction in act II."**

Jason Strid, Milo Zarakov, Rich Lundy, John Echols, Mary Frank, Anne Hamilton, Peter Thompson, John DeLong, Maria Nadauld, Bill Amatneek, Rick Nagle, Charles Benson, Jordan Kiener, Steven Cahn, and Tom Payne knew the work in question is *Don Giovanni* by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.

CBA trivia regular and producer of KALW's *Bluegrass Signal* Peter Thompson pointed out that five years earlier, 1782, Paisiello's *Barber of Seville* also featured an aria with mandolin accompaniment, which likely influenced Mozart. Indeed, Anne Hamilton noted in her response that the serenade "was actually a bit of an operatic trope by the time it was composed." Thompson added, "Paisiello's aria is almost certainly for the Neapolitan mandolin, which is quite different from the Mozart aria which is for Milanese or Lombardian mandolin." The Neapolitan instrument is the more familiar; the Milanese and Lombardian versions are "typically six single strings made of gut, nylon, or wire-wrapped silk … which produce a softer, more delicate tone, similar to early lutes."

We fired up the CBA Trivia-tron 5000 to randomly determine **Mary Frank** is the winner of a cool CBA cap—we were fresh out of mandolin capos—to show off at her next visit to the opera!

NOV/DEC TRIVIA

For the holidays, we pose this puzzler:

"Shakespeare named a play after it, people lit bonfires, and West Virginia fiddlers played this tune related to 'Brushy Fork of John's Creek.' Name the fiddle tune.

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

This month's prize is a lovely CBA bandana, and as a bonus nod to the season, a CBA holiday ornament!

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