



Bluegrass Express

a publication of the Bluegrass Music Association of Maine

Fall 2025

Thank You, Mama Beth!

CELEBRATING BETH REVELS, BMAM'S OUTGOING PRESIDENT

By Taylor Smith

Beth Revels has been a cornerstone of Maine's bluegrass community for decades. A charter member and current president of the Bluegrass Music Association of Maine, Beth has helped build the organization from its inception 30 years ago. She was a familiar voice on the radio with her long-running weekly bluegrass show—Mama's Mid-coast Bluegrass Radio Show—on Bowdoin College's WBOR, and could always be found picking around festival campsites and at the monthly BMAM jams.

Beth recently announced that she was stepping down as president of BMAM. The decision was bittersweet: She has been such a champion of the organization and of bluegrass in Maine, and we'll miss her tireless support. But we're also so happy that she's able to take a well-deserved break and hand the reins to the next president (who will be announced in October).

I've always known her as Mama Beth, and from my early days going to festivals in Maine, she was a constant presence at BMAM jams and at the festival booth, selling t-shirts and stickers and making sure people knew about the work BMAM does to support the growth of bluegrass in Maine.

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A CONVERSATION WITH ROCK HEART'S ALEX MACLEOD

By Taylor Smith



In what's becoming an October tradition, New England bluegrass powerhouse Rock Hearts is making its fourth-annual pilgrimage to the Center Theatre in Dover-Foxcroft. The concert on Saturday, Oct. 18 is proudly presented by the Bluegrass Music Association of Maine. The band takes the stage at 7 pm, and fiddle fans can sign up for an afternoon workshop with Rock Hearts' fiddler Austin Scelzo from 1- 3pm.

I recently caught up with Alex MacLeod, Rock Hearts' guitarist and vocalist, to talk about the band's close connection with Maine, their long-standing friendship and collaboration with iconic singer-songwriter Jonathan Edwards, and what's behind Alex's efforts to dig deeper into the history of bluegrass in New England.

TAYLOR: This is the fourth year Rock Hearts will be performing at the Center Theatre in Dover-Foxcroft. What keeps drawing you back?

ALEX: Everything. First of all, it's a great time for the band to be together. BMAM is so great and gracious with everything from the accommodations to all of the leg-work to promote the show. [BMAM board member] John McKusick is a wonderful sponsor of the concert, and the sound guy and the manager of the Center Theatre are just super cool—they're really good at what they do.

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Thank You, Mama Beth!

CELEBRATING BETH REVELS, BMAM'S OUTGOING PRESIDENT

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Beth is unfailingly kind and is always ready with a smile. She loves the music, and also loves the bluegrass community. BMAM has been so lucky to have her as president, and we're so grateful for her work over the last 30 years to keep this organization growing and thriving.

Beth and I recently met over coffee to talk about BMAM's history, her own musical journey, and her hopes for the future of bluegrass music in Maine.

TAYLOR: The first question I've got to ask: Where did you get the nickname Mama Beth?

BETH: They were calling me Mama in the Navy before I had kids. There were a couple of different shops where it was, like, 25 guys and me. This was back in the day and I was in a non-traditional occupation in the Navy. I wasn't a secretary and I wasn't a nurse—I was out there turning wrenches as an electronic tech. The last thing I worked on was the transmitters and receivers over here at Brunswick Naval Air Station. Radios were my specialty.

TAYLOR: How did you first get involved with BMAM?

BETH: I moved to Maine in 1982, and I didn't know there was bluegrass anywhere. I kind of got in with the country crowd for a little bit, but my first connection to bluegrass was through Blizzard Bob's radio show, "The Blue Country," on WMPG on Wednesday mornings. I worked with Bob at the post office, so I knew him personally. When Al Hawkes came on as a guest and mentioned he and Candi Sawyer were starting up this bluegrass association, I called up Al right away and said, "Just let me know, I'll do anything to help." That's when he got me on board for the first steering committee.

TAYLOR: What were those early days of BMAM like?

BETH: Candi Sawyer was really a big part of the beginning. She was the first secretary and newsletter editor, and then I took over for her. The original group included Al Hawkes, Candi, myself, Bill Umbel, Joe Kennedy, Sandy and Greg Cormier, and several others I wish I could remember better. There's a picture somewhere of that first steering committee. Bill and I were newcomers to this bluegrass community, so we suddenly got to meet all these people and find out all this stuff was happening. Everything happened at the Roost at that time.

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Beth with long-time Windy Ridge bandmate Jim Chard

Fiddle Workshop

October 18, 2025
1-3PM

"Austin Scelzo hosts an in person workshop designed to explore his "Roadmap to Bluegrass and Country Fiddle Mastery" - a sequential guide to breaking down the skills necessary to thrive in settings that involve improvisation, harmony, chords, back-up, and rhythm playing on the fiddle. Austin was nominated by the International Bluegrass Music Association as "Mentor of the Year" for his work in Education" Don't miss this great opportunity!

- When: October 18, 2025 - 1:00-3:00 PM
- Maximum seats: 25
- Fee for workshop \$30

Location: Center Theater, 20 E Main St, Dover-Foxcroft, Maine

*Please note that this is NOT an accessible space. Stairs only.

Sign up and learn more:

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CELEBRATING BETH REVELS, BMAM'S OUTGOING PRESIDENT

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Beth has been the driving force of the Kids Academy at the Blistered Fingers Family Bluegrass Festival.

TAYLOR: Those monthly BMAM jams at the Roost in Buxton were always a great time.

BETH: The Roost had its good and bad points. People used to say there were too many people making too much noise, but I really liked it because you got to see everybody. These days, a lot of the venues for jams have more rooms, but once you go in a room, you never come back out. You just stay with your little gang there. At the Roost, you were all in one space together. That's actually where I met Jim Chard—we were outside on one of those nice December days when it was like 60 degrees, and we sang a song together. I knew the harmony, and we did this harmony and suddenly it was like, "Hey, this could work." That spun into Windy Ridge Band for the next 30 years for me.

TAYLOR: How did you get into playing bluegrass?

BETH: It was self-taught, basically. I grew up a little bit folky with my acoustic guitar at 12 years old. My mother used to have Judy Collins, Joan Baez, Karen Carpenter, and everybody playing on the stereo when I was a kid. But it wasn't until I started learning guitar and folk songs that things really took off. My first bluegrass cassette was a mix tape, and I played it over and over again. So I was a little bit behind when I met all these people who had been doing it and running festivals for years. I was basically there just to help out and find a little community.

The first festival I went to was the Oxford Festival way back when, and I just went to the show. I didn't know you could walk around where everybody's camping and picking. I had no idea that that was part of it. I try to tell people how much they will enjoy it once they go, because once you go, that's it.

TAYLOR: BMAM went through a difficult period when it nearly dissolved. Can you tell us about that?

BETH: I had been doing secretary work, newsletter editing, and board duties for about 10 years when I got burnt out. You know how it is—the core people end up doing everything. So I stepped away, and other folks like Glenn Bowman and Debbie Burdin jumped in and did great work. They had moved the meetings to different locations—first at people's houses, then at the music room at the University of Maine at Augusta, then to the a music shop in Fairfield. But eventually, those folks started getting burnt out and leaving one by one. At one point, we had just three people on the board for probably a year because people had just dropped off. That's when Joe Kennedy and I came back to help rebuild it.



TAYLOR: What are you most proud of regarding BMAM's work?

BETH: First of all, my real affection for this organization comes from the fact that we set up these public jams where you don't have to know anybody. You just have to know where the jam is and maybe have a five-dollar bill to get in. You can join this community whether you know three chords or you've been playing for 60 years. When I first got to Maine, if you didn't know anybody who played, you just didn't know where the jams were.

The other thing I love about bluegrass is that shared knowledge of maybe 30 to 100 songs. When you go to other genres, you don't have that. And there's this leveler in bluegrass—you can all play the same song at different skill levels. Some guy can be playing just G, C, and D, while another takes breaks like Billy Strings. You can still play the same song together, start and end together. There's something really cool about that.

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A CONVERSATION WITH ROCK HEART'S ALEX MACLEOD

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ALEX: I think the first year was close to selling out, and the second year it was standing room only. That's what we're shooting for every year. It's great, too, because [mandolinist] Bill Thibodeau grew up not too far away from there in Cambridge, Maine. It feels like our biggest following is in Maine, and it's wonderful because we get to see so many friends and family.

The audience in Dover-Foxcroft is always so amazing. They're so electric. As a musician, it's a long night if you play a show and you're just background music or the audience isn't really reactive. But the folks at the Center Theatre, man, they just bring it. It's a lot of fun.

TAYLOR: That's a long drive from southern New England. Glad you guys are up for making the trip!

ALEX: We actually drive up on Friday and stay over with Jonathan and Sandy Edwards in the Portland area. We have a wonderful hang and visit and do some jamming and do some chatting. That helps to break up the drive. On Saturday, we can sleep in and just take our own sweet time getting up to the Center Theatre.

TAYLOR: How did you guys get to know Jonathan Edwards?

ALEX: Rick Brodsky, our bass player, had toured with Jonathan as his bass player for a while. Probably around 2010, when I was playing with Northern Lights, we did a show at the Jonathan Edwards Winery in Connecticut—no relation to Jonathan the singer, but he does an annual show there. We played with him for a few songs, and I had the opportunity to sing "Don't Cry Blue" with Jonathan. Fast forward to when we were doing our second album, *Wanderlust*, and we decided to cover "Don't Cry Blue." Rick said, "Hey, Jonathan, check out our recording, what do you think?" And Jonathan was ecstatic. He's like, "I want in on that." So sure enough, he records some harmony on it.

Jonathan and Sandy are just the two most genuine, loving, coolest people and they love to host. The first time we did the Dover-Foxcroft show, Jonathan said we could crash at his house. He remembered he wasn't going to be there—he was playing at the Infinity Hall in Connecticut. He said, "Just go to the house. Help yourselves." We showed up at 1:30 in the morning and there were two houses at the end of the street, and we didn't know which one was which. We sent Austin [Scelzo, Rock Hearts' fiddler] to one of the houses and a guy comes out holstering a gun—he's a state cop, Jonathan's neighbor, and he pointed us to Jonathan's house. Jonathan has just become a dear friend of the band, and when we're at his place, we can't not jam together.

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CELEBRATING BETH REVELS, BMAM'S OUTGOING PRESIDENT

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TAYLOR: You've had a great run as BMAM's president. The organization will miss you a lot, but you've definitely earned the opportunity to take a step back. Looking forward, what would you like to see from BMAM in the coming years?

BETH: I'd like to see a few more public jams open up in different areas. Maine is a big state and there are a lot of underserved areas. I also think there's a big future now because of the internet. It helps us get the word out so easily about concerts and jams and other events. Back in the day, we used to have to list all the concerts by hand in the newsletter. And if you didn't get it in, that was it—it wasn't in there.

TAYLOR: What's next for you personally?

BETH: Well, I'm slowing down a little with playing out, but I still do a couple of bluegrass gigs a year at the Alzheimer's House with Kate Greeley, Anthony Jaccarino, and Stevie Davis from our old Windy Ridge group. I also do some Irish music and Oktoberfest performances. I've been fortunate to do some MC work at festivals lately, which is a natural transition from doing radio for so long. [ed. note: Mama's Midcoast Bluegrass Radio Show on Bowdoin College's WBOR was a weekly staple for bluegrass fans in southern Maine and beyond.] I always say I have no skills, but I can run my mouth a little bit.

The most important thing is that I'll still be around the community. I know better than anybody because I was preaching it - you don't have to be on the board to be on a committee. If I go to a festival and don't sit at the booth, I feel like I'm doing something wrong.

TAYLOR: Any final thoughts on BMAM's 30th anniversary?

BETH: This is our 30th year, which I think is really a big deal. It's a great place for people to meet and share their love of bluegrass music, and I hope we continue to grow. The young people coming up seem to still want to play, which gives me hope. The bluegrass community consists of such nice people. Everybody's there just to have fun and they all have this great thing in common. Once you go to your first festival, that's it. You're hooked.



A CONVERSATION WITH ALEX MACLEOD *Continued from page 4*

TAYLOR: Rock Hearts seems like a tight-knit group. How would you describe the band dynamic?

ALEX: We genuinely have fun with each other as a band. We love each other as brothers. Joe [Deetz, Rock Hearts' banjo player] puts it the best when he says that we speak the same musical language. With all the bands that we've ever been in, this is our favorite band. There's no ego—we all bring what we can bring. There's never really contention, never really any kind of strain. We all play off of each other instrumentally and musically and we all love the same stuff.

We're going to play original music that sounds like Jimmy Martin or Jim & Jesse, or Seldom Scene, or Bluegrass Cardinals. That's where we go and we all agree. It's just natural and not a lot of bands have that. We're super grateful that we get to play music together.

TAYLOR: You guys put on a great show. I love how you always seem to connect with the audience.

ALEX: My very first show that my dad came to was at the Best Western in Keene, N.H., on a Monday night. We played 13 songs. I got off the stage and went to my dad with my chest out, "Hey Dad, what did you think?" He looked at me and goes, "Well, Al, you did 13 songs in that set, nine of them not one guy in your band said anything to the audience for about 30 seconds. I caught you watching Monday Night Football at least three times. If you can't connect with the audience, you might as well just stay home."

That was my balloon that popped, and it burned a hole in my heart. I said that anytime I'm playing music now on stage, I perform as if I've got friends and family in my living room and it's just that comfortable. That was a hard lesson I got from my dad, and that's the same lesson that Sam Tidwell taught Billy.

TAYLOR: How did you get started in bluegrass music?

ALEX: My path was directly descended from my dad, Sandy. My family is from Concord, Massachusetts. Bob French, prior to moving to Maine, lived in Acton, Massachusetts. So, my dad would get to go picking over at Bob's house when he was a kid. Even when Bob moved to Maine, my dad was still meeting him and playing with him at the Hillbilly Ranch with Herb Applin.

I grew up as a military kid, we moved around a lot, and a lot of the stories my dad told me were about picking with Herb and Bob and Joe Val and Don Stover and Sam and Bob Tidwell. He spoke about these people like they were family. I heard more stories about them than I did my own blood relatives.

When we eventually came back to New England, I think I was about 17, I went to my first Joe Val Bluegrass Festival at Newton North High School when it was a one-day festival and I just kind of fell in love with it.

TAYLOR: You're working on a super interesting project about bluegrass in New England. What's the story there?

ALEX: For the last six months or so, I've embarked along with Rick Brodsky on this grandiose idea of writing a book about the evolution of bluegrass music in New England. When you think about the history of bluegrass music and all the hubs that were established in the 1940s and 1950s—southern California, the DC/ Maryland area, Ohio, the Tennessee scene—New England since about 1958 was just as entrenched in the scene with Tex Logan and the Lilly Brothers and Don Stover and Joe Val and so many others that came up here to Boston.

TAYLOR: When you ask and talk with other people, there was a scene in Vermont, a scene in New Hampshire, scene in Connecticut, a scene in Maine, and each state has a really distinctly different evolution.

I've interviewed 10 people so far – bluegrass pioneers that were there, that were rubbing elbows with Sonny Osborne when he came up to visit Bob French in Maine, or when Bill Monroe came up to Barre, Vermont, and met Bill Keith for the first time. I'm hearing these stories from the people that were there and it's mind-blowing.

ALEX : After Herb Applin died, the weight of his loss really kicked me and I said, you know, the longer you wait, the fewer of these guys are going to be around. Thankfully, Jim Rooney and Bill Nowlin from Rounder Records have offered to be advisors from behind the scenes. I'm hanging out with Ken Irwin every time I can and picking his brain. It's really cool to hear from people that were there in the beginning.

TAYLOR: On behalf of New England bluegrass fans, thanks for taking on that project! So what's next for Rock Hearts?

ALEX : We have a few more shows to do this fall. We've got a little mini tour through the Adirondacks with the Adirondack Bluegrass League. We may have a show in December, and then we lay low and we're getting ready to go down and start working on our fourth project sometime next year. Meanwhile we're collecting material, listening to a lot of songs. I'm trying to get some writing done so we can have some originals on there.

The Bluegrass Music Association of Maine is proud to present Rock Hearts live at the Center Theatre in Dover-Foxcroft at 7pm on Saturday, Oct. 18.

Tickets range from \$20-\$24 and are available at www.centertheatre.org or by calling 207-564-8943.

Rock Hearts' fiddler Austin Scelzo also will be offering a fiddle workshop from 1pm-3pm on the day of the show. For more details, visit www.austinscelzo.com/fiddle.



From l.- r.: Rick Brodsky, Alex MacLeod, Joe Deetz, Bill Thibodeau, Austin Scelzo.

BMAM ELECTION UPDATE

Each year, the Bluegrass Music Association of Maine holds elections to fill both board seats and officer roles within the organization. As a registered 501(c)3 nonprofit, BMAM relies on its board members and officers to guide the organization as it pursues its commitment to promoting and supporting musicians in Maine that are helping to preserve and grow this important American musical genre, and to provide opportunities for audiences to come together to enjoy this music that we all love.

For the first time, BMAM is holding its elections via electronic ballot. Members received emails in mid September with unique links to cast their votes online. We also are making mail-in ballots available to those who prefer to vote by paper. Voting ends on September 29: Those voting electronically must make their choices by that date, and those voting via mail-in ballot must have their ballots postmarked by that date. We'll announce the election results in October.

Read on for detailed information for each candidate vying for a role as board member or officer. And thank you to each of the candidates for their willingness to volunteer their time and energy to keep BMAM thriving today and in the years to come. And for those who would like to be part of this wonderful organization, please reach out to any current board member or officer. We'd love to tell you more and help you get involved!

BOARD MEMBER/OFFICER CANDIDATES

BILL HOLDEN

As a lover of all things music, I was first drawn to the guitar at age 11. After decades of an on-again, mostly off-again relationship with my guitar, I heard Jerry Douglas playing the dobro. Lightning bolt! So, it was about 20 years ago that I bought my first dobro. Since then, the sound and soul of the dobro have captivated and inspired me in ways I never thought possible.

But more importantly, I couldn't have imagined back then that I had unknowingly become a member of such an incredible, supportive and vibrant community. Over the years I've told people that it would be difficult for me to count the number of folks that I now consider friends, all because of my involvement in bluegrass music. Because of this involvement, the list and network of friends and fellow musicians across the state and country is endless. As the saying goes, priceless! I'm a long-time Mainer who grew up in Yarmouth and went to the University of Maine at Orono. I am now retired after a few decades spent working at L.L. Bean. My wife, Stacey, and I have lived in North Yarmouth for 44 years and have raised two adult daughters. I enjoy going to festivals and jams and hanging out/picking with friends, fellow bandmates and musicians.

PAT LARAMEE

Pat Laramee has been a member of the Bluegrass Music Association of Maine board of directors for two years. Since she first heard Doc Watson at a Newport Folk Music festival years ago, she has been dedicated to preserving this vital American music. She continuously encourages others (especially young persons) to learn the related instruments, songs, and history of the genre with an eye towards getting them on board to pick, play, and sing.

CHAUNCEY DEVIN

I have loved live music since I was teenager. My dad drove me to my first show when I was 15 and I was hooked. Not just to the music but to the community around it. The thing is, punk music was my first love. Except for Old and in the Way occasionally, I didn't start listening to bluegrass until 2020. When I first attended Thomas Point in 2021, I was hooked again.

The grassroots ethos of bluegrass really speaks to me. How everyone who enjoys bluegrass also contributes to the scene is a great thing. For example how professional musicians will run jams and teach the inexperienced. Everyone seems to be into bluegrass for the love it.

I want to help continue bluegrass music and its community, so I am running to be on the BMAM board. I hope to spread the good word of bluegrass and draw people into concerts, festivals and jams. I have grown a lot as a musician because of the great people in the bluegrass scene and I want to give back.

Growing up as a little punk rocker and as a current member of a punk/metal band, I have experience within grassroots music communities. This experience will help me be a contributing and successful board member.

Bluegrass Music Association of Maine

FARMINGTON BLUEGRASS JAM

4th Sunday
of the month*

Oct. 26 Nov. 23

1:00 to 4:00 PM.

Several rooms, all levels welcome.

BMAM Members-\$5
Non-members-\$7

***** NEW LOCATION! *****

St. Joseph's Hall, 130 Quebec St.
FARMINGTON

For more info, text Stan Keach at 207-485-0298,
or email stankeachbluegrass76@gmail.com.

BOARD MEMBER/OFFICER CANDIDATES

JOHN MCKUSICK

Although not performers, my wife, Sharon & I are strong supporters of Bluegrass and (old) country music throughout the area. We first discovered real southern bluegrass music at the Doyle Lawson Bluegrass Festival in Denton, NC many years ago. After that first festival, the hook was set!

We are the owners of McKusick Petroleum Co. in Dover-Foxcroft which we established in 1972. I am now working at being partially retired.

I am involved in and we support: Center Theatre in Dover-Foxcroft, Wayside Theatre in Dexter, Maine Country Music Hall of Fame, Maine Academy of Country Music, and BMAM.

I have enjoyed this past year on the board of BMAM, attending monthly meetings, working the association table at festivals as possible, and helping with the October Rock Hearts show in Dover Foxcroft.

I look forward to a full term as a board member of BMAM and the promotion of bluegrass music in Maine. I would appreciate your consideration.

BOB BERGESCH

Banjo & Bluegrass: I started learning Banjo using Pete Seeger's classic "How to Play the 5-String Banjo" when I was in high school during the Folk era. I then put my banjo aside, and pursued other interests, both musically and in life itself.

My interest in playing music, and more specifically Banjo music, was rekindled some 30+ years later after my family had settled into Maine. I started banjo lessons with Carter Logan at 317 Main, and began to attend local bluegrass concerts and festivals.

I first met the BMAM organization at these events, starting about 2012 or so. I joined BMAM Board in 2015. I served as Treasurer 2015 to 2022. In 2020, BMAM moved our records (starting with 2019) to the Quicken platform. Nellie [Kennedy] (who has served as Treasurer since 2023) was familiar with the platform from her outside work she was the moving force on this effort.

Working with [BMAM Webmaster] Cyndi Longo, we also set up the mechanism to accept Donations and other payments on our website BMAM Southern Jams & Summer Festivals: Jams: At NYA 2016-2020 - North Yarmouth CC 2022-2023 - First Parish Church - Yarmouth 2023-2025

Festivals, 2015 - 2025: Financial and logistical aspects of BMAM's festival presence including merchandise order quantities and booth setup and logistics, as well as event reports, etc.

Jimmy Cox: I met Jimmy in 2011. He was a Maine Bluegrass pioneer, a well-known Banjo player, and nationally recognized banjo-maker. I learned a lot about bluegrass and other things from Jim, and I am fortunate to own two examples of his exceptional banjo craftsmanship.

Bluegrass Community: I believe the "bluegrass community" includes both "classic" bluegrass as well as current expressions of bluegrass music. Bill Monroe and Earl Scruggs were "progressive" in their day. Billy Strings, the Punch Brothers and other modern bluegrass bands are the current embodiment of classic bluegrass traditions updated by contemporary approaches.

STEVE BIXBY

When I first heard Earl Scruggs play "Foggy Mountain Breakdown" in the sound track to the movie "Bonnie and Clyde" I felt that special draw to Bluegrass music. It was in the summer of 1980 when a friend invited me to tag along to the Berkshire Mountain Bluegrass Festival, that defined my starting point into this Bluegrass journey. From that weekend forward I was caught hook, line, and sinker!

I was blessed to see so many first generation artists and live bluegrass music in the clubs, concerts, and BBU functions of those 80's and 90's. Following acts such as Joe Val and Don Stover locally, I was able to feed my desire for more live Bluegrass Music. Summer seasons were filled with attending a greater number of festivals throughout New England.

I revisited playing Bass as I had some experience with an electric Bass guitar in high school and saw that there would be opportunities for me in the Bluegrass jam world. I bought my first upright Bass, (a 1954 Kay M-1 which I still own) and headed out to field pick and try to learn as much as I could.

My playing took on a more serious track when I was asked to join the Lost Wages band in 1997 at the Noppet Hill Bluegrass Festival. It was with Lost Wages that I was very fortunate to get to play many festivals and shows all over the northeast.

It was around 2001 that I relocated full time as a resident of Round Pond, Maine. Here I helped get the King Ro Market Jam started as well as a monthly jam at Lincoln Academy.

My band associations here in Maine have included The Moxie Cove Band, Mountain Emergency, and The Blackfly Boys along with The Bixby Family Band with my wife and daughter. It has truly been my honor and privilege to be the Bass player for The Katahdin Valley Boys for the last 16 years.

TAYLOR SMITH

I'm just finishing up my first two-year term as a BMAM board member, and recently was named vice chair of the board. I also serve as the editor of BMAM's quarterly newsletter, *The Bluegrass Express*, and sit on the board's online and social presence committee. It's been a privilege to be involved with BMAM and to have a hand in guiding the organization alongside the other board members and officers. I'm a resident of Cumberland and live with my partner, Laura, and our kids. While I'm not originally from Maine, I've called the state home more for more than 30 years. I've been going to bluegrass festivals in Maine since the 1990s and have built a wonderful network of friends and fellow pickers from all over New England. The bluegrass scene up here is a tight-knit and supportive community, and I'm glad to be a part of it. In addition to picking at campsites, I also play in several bands and pick-up groups in the Portland area.

I'd love to continue serving on the BMAM board. Thanks for your support!

HURRY! VOTING ENDS ON SEPTEMBER 29

BAND SPOTLIGHT: STILLWATER

By Taylor Smith

Rising from the college music scene in Old Town, Stillwater is a relatively new band that's already making waves in Maine's bluegrass scene. The band consists of guitarist Trip Nickel, bassist Kiera Luu, fiddler George Horvat, mandolinist Yoni Musher, and dobro/banjo player Jack Pasternak. The band weaves its members' backgrounds in jazz and classical music with their deep love for bluegrass and Americana traditions.

Kiera was kind enough to share more about Stillwater, from the band's genesis and creative process to their favorite festivals to pick at. Read on to learn more about this up-and-coming band, and make sure to catch them on stage next time they're in your area.



Stillwater performs at the recent Crooked River Gathering festival.

From l. - r.: George Horvat, Yoni Musher, Kiera Luu, Trip Nickel, Jack Pasternak

TAYLOR: How did Stillwater come together?

KIERA: Stillwater formed in the summer of 2023 in Old Town, Maine. We met in jazz combos and various music projects while attending UMaine, and wanted to keep the music alive after graduating.

TAYLOR: How would you describe your sound?

KIERA: I would describe our sound as a mix of jamgrass, gospel, bluegrass, and newgrass. We all come from different musical backgrounds, and so our sound reflects all of our jazz trainings, George's and my classical training, and all of our interests in folk, jamband, and southern rock music. There are so many artists we learn from, but to name a few, Billy Strings, Tony Rice, Ricky Skaggs, Emmylou Harris, Jake Workman, and David Grisman.

TAYLOR: What's the band's songwriting process?

KIERA: We write music differently based on who's bringing a song to the table. For example, Yoni and I like to write songs that are pretty wordy, and usually start as poems. Jack and Trip tend to start with instrumental licks and write from there. I really love writing for this group, because I feel like everyone takes in each others' ideas thoughtfully and ruminates on them. We have songs we've been playing since the beginning of Stillwater, that sound totally different a year later because new ideas have popped up and we've welcomed them in.

TAYLOR: Where do you most enjoy picking?

KIERA: Our favorite place to pick is definitely the festival scene. The campground jams are a great place to connect with other musicians and make new friends. We've played showcases at a few festivals so far, the highlights being Podunk, Ossipee Valley, and Thomas Point Beach. We just played the brand new Crooked River Gathering, and can't wait to see how that grows in the coming years.

One of my favorite moments for us as a band is actually when we're off the clock going to Delfest just for fun. We've done that the past couple years, and we'll play a gig in Cumberland, Maryland, after the festival so that it's not just fun and games.

TAYLOR: What's coming up for Stillwater?

KIERA: We're planning to release another live album this year, with more originals than our last EP, the Cedar House Sessions Vol. 1. All of our sound, booking, recording, mixing, etc., is done in house, so this has all been a collaborative effort by us five, and we're learning a lot as we go. We've been trying to book as many festival and out-of-state gigs as possible for next year. In the meantime, we're really looking forward to playing the 2025 Common Ground Fair at the end of this month.

For more information about Stillwater, including upcoming live dates, check out www.stillwaterband.com.

BMAM SPONSORS THE CROOKED RIVER GATHERING BAND CONTEST

By Bob Bergesch

BMAM organized a band contest at the new Crooked River Gathering over Labor Day weekend. The contest took place on Thursday night shortly after dark on the Manic Mountain After Hours Stage, which many recognized as the venerable Stage Too! at the Ossipee Valley Festivals.

Five bands took part in the contest with the bands ranging in size from two to six musicians. Each group played three tunes through a simple stage setup. The contest took place over about 90 minutes, and drew a large and vocal crowd of supporters. Many in the audience stuck around for the late-night old-time jam hosted by Main Stage performers Two Runner.

The bands that participated ranged from groups that play and gig together regularly to newly-minted outfits assembled for this contest. The winning band, Timothy, walked away with BMAM coffee mugs and t-shirts as well as first-place trophies. Tim FitzPatrick and Friends earned second place and took home their own set of BMAM coffee mugs. Flop-Eared Mule, the White Mountain Ramblers and the Crooked River Ramblers all had fantastic sets during the contest. Big thanks to all the groups that signed up and participated!

The winners were chosen by a three-member panel of judges: BMAM Vice President Joe Kennedy; BMAM member Andrew Bohrman; and BMAM founding member and Jenny Brook Bluegrass Festival promoter Candi Sawyer.

BMAM Vice Chair Taylor Smith helped organize the band contest and served as emcee. A group of board members and officers—including Hideaki Mizuno, Shari Elder, Treasurer Nellie Kennedy and President Beth Revels—pitched in a lot of time and effort to make the contest a success. Taylor also was grateful for the help of Clementine Feeley, a 10th grader at North Yarmouth Academy, who did a fantastic job as stage manager to keep the contest running smoothly.

BMAM was pleased to be part of the festival's programming. Many thanks to the organizers for including the band contest in the weekend's stellar lineup. We hope BMAM can contribute to the success of the Crooked River Gathering in years to come.



Crooked River Gathering band contest winners, Timothy



The Crooked River Ramblers



Second-place winners Tim FitzPatrick and Friends



Judges: From l. - r.: Andrew Bohrmann, Joe Kennedy, Candi Sawyer

MAINE COUNTRY MUSIC HALL OF FAME'S EXTRAVAGANZA FUNDRAISER

The Maine Country Music Hall of Fame's annual Extravaganza Fundraiser 2025 will be on Sunday, October 19, 2025, at 1pm. The event takes place at the Silver Spur at 272 Lewiston St., Mechanic Falls, ME. Doors open at 11:30am and the Museum Open House will be open to all from 10am to 12pm in the lower level of the Silver Spur. This year's performers include the Don Campbell Band and the duo Preston and Curry. Tickets are \$15 at the door. For more information, please call 207-613-5411. Hope to see you there!

INDOOR JAM SEASON IS HERE!

With festival season largely wrapped up for the year, it's time to put away the tents and get the campers ready for winter storage. And while we won't be picking around campsites, BMAM's indoor jams offer a great way to keep meeting up with friends and fellow pickers throughout the fall, winter and early spring.

BMAM hosts three jams on a monthly basis: The Eastern Jam in Brewer, the Southern Jam in Yarmouth, and the Farmington Jam.

FARMINGTON JAM

The Farmington Jam is temporarily moving while the Farmington Community Center undergoes renovations. In October and November, the Farmington Jam will take place at St. Joseph's Hall, 130 Quebec Street. Stay tuned for more information.

FARMINGTON JAM DATES:

- October 26 • November 23

EASTERN JAM

The Eastern Jam takes place at the Old Town Riverside Grange at 1266 North Main St., Brewer. The jam typically runs from 12:00-3pm. It's open to levels of players and features two floors for jamming. Acoustic instruments only, please! Parking is easy and admission is \$5 for BMAM members and \$7 for non-members. For more information, contact Brewster Bassett at 207-404-3111.

EASTERN JAM DATES:

- October 5 • November 2 • December 7
- January 4 • February 1 • March 1

Note: No April jam due to the Easter holiday.

SOUTHERN JAM

The Southern Jam takes place from 1pm-4pm at the First Parish Congregational Church at 116 Main St., Yarmouth. The venue offers two floors of jamming, with plenty of room for pickers of all abilities. In recent years, the Sunday afternoon jam has featured guided jams with expert pickers such as Melissa Bragdon-Caron and Lincoln Meyers. Ample street parking is available, and the jam offers coffee, snacks, and light refreshments. The cost is \$5 for BMAM members and \$7 for non-members. For more information, reach out to BMAM board member Bob Bergesch at rbergesch@gmail.com or 207-831-8908.

YARMOUTH JAM DATES:

- October 12 • November 9 • December 14
- January 11 • February 8 • March 8 • April 12

*Watch for BMAM updates on Facebook
or at www.mainebluegrass.org.*



BMAM NEW AND RENEWED MEMBERSHIPS

6/1/25 - 8/23/25

NEW MEMBERS

Mason Beach
Angie Duquette
Sarah Herbold
Hanna Jordan
Dwight Keene
Lisa Kimball
Jennifer Ladd
Jan Lee
Peg Loughran
& Nat Peirce

JTina Mayone
ohn Nidiry
Paul J. Richard
Steven Schwartz
Joseph Smith
Matt & Donna Stein
Steven Tanguay
Jesse Watterson
Mark Wiley

MEMBER RENEWALS

Dan Arsenault
& Lori Wilson
Steve Bixby
Lonnie Blood
Melissa Bragdon Caron
Kevin R. & Vera Bryant
Kenton Chun
Tom & Thea Cohen
Gary Grant
Gene Groves
Dean Henderson
Denise Hervieux
Bill Holden
Stan & Liz Keach
Todd & Cori Ketcham
Doreen & Frank Kiimball
Barry Knowles
John & Nora Krainis
Connie Lundy
Kiera Luu & Jack
Pasternak

Robert & Valerie
MacDonald
Mac McConathy
Ryan McDonald
Peter & Lucinda McGinn
Hideaki Mizuno
Debbie Morse
Raymond Paradis
David Pearson
Frank Perkins
Steve & Anna Peterson
Dina & Joe Richards
Troy Richardson
& Flora Drury
Mike Skrip
Taylor Smith
Daniel Sowder
John Wallace, Jr.
Paul Williams
& Alice Beattie

Sunday Oct. 19th

2025

The Silver Spur
272 Lewiston St.
Mechanic Falls, ME



THE SILVER SPUR
Mechanic Falls, ME

Maine Country Music "Extravaganza 2025!"



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Doors open at 11:30AM
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THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS!

FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL 207-613-5411



FESTIVAL REPORT: UP NORTH AT COUNTY BLUEGRASS

By Don Glidden

I would like to share my recent experience at the County Bluegrass festival. I live in the Old Town area, so its about a 3-hour drive pulling our camper with a stop in Houlton at the truck stop, which is an easy in and out with the camper. As you get deeper into the County there comes a point where the landscape opens up to spectacular panoramic views.

Once you arrive at the check-in gate in Ft. Fairfield you are greeted by host Nancy Rogeski or staff and given many options to set up your camper as the fields have electric hookups just about everywhere and tons of space for those not needing electric. The bathrooms facilities are very clean and well kept during the festival.

We went a day early on Wednesday and there was a pot luck supper with BBQ chicken provided at no cost by festival hosts Stev & Nancy Rogeski.

The stage venue is under a huge covered pavilion with open sides that can be closed if need be offering a very comfortable space to enjoy the very talented band lineup. The music features some of the finest picking you will hear anywhere. Then the field picking kicks in at various campsites and under the pavilion after the stage closes.

If you do need to go to town, Ft. Fairfield has everything you need—and if not, Presque Isle and Caribou are only a few miles away. I golf, and there are some great golf course nearby also.

You can check out their website www.countybluegrass.com for more detailed info. Hope you get an opportunity to check it out next year.





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**The Bluegrass Music Association of Maine is...**

an organization of people, listeners and players, who enjoy Bluegrass music. It was formed in March of 1995, and incorporated on July 8, 1996 as a Maine 501(c)3 nonprofit corporation. The BMAM, governed by a volunteer Board of Directors, welcomes all Bluegrass friends, fans, and pickers to become active members.

Functions of the organization include the following:

- To educate the public about Bluegrass music, in order to foster an appreciation of its history and cultural heritage;
- To further the enjoyment of Bluegrass music, for ourselves and others, through teaching, sharing, and playing;
- To encourage participation in Bluegrass music events;
- To promote Bluegrass music as a family entertainment;
- To support area workshops, festivals, and concerts;
- To support area musicians and bands that play Bluegrass music;
- To inform members about Bluegrass and related events around the state;
- To cooperate with other organizations to promote Bluegrass and related music;
- To preserve the memories of those who have preceded us in this field of endeavor.

COPY DEADLINE

Copy deadline is the 15th of the month prior to publication date. Ad rates are for camera-ready copy. Ads to be made up from scratch have an additional cost and must be sent by the 5th of the month. Payments must accompany ads when they are submitted.

SEND ALL ADVERTISING TO:

Bluegrass Express
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The Bluegrass Express is...

a quarterly publication of the Newsletter Committee.

For more information on how you can become involved, contact any committee member.

Please email any news, photos, article information, or anything you find pertaining to bluegrass in Maine to tsmith@mainebluegrass.com or mail to this address:

BMAM

Re: Newsletter
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Advertising Rates

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Bluegrass Music Association of Maine

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MaineBluegrass.org

www.MaineBluegrass.org

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JOIN THE BLUEGRASS MUSIC ASSOCIATION OF MAINE

A one year membership includes:
Quarterly Newsletter
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DATE: _____ EVENT: _____

I am a: ___ Fan ___ Musician ___ Band Member

Primary Instrument:: _____

Band Name: _____

Volunteer Opportunities: *(check if interested)*

☐ S. Jam (Yarmouth) ☐ E. Jam (Brewer)

☐ Teaching ☐ Newsletter ☐ Festivals

Other things I can help with: _____



Bluegrass Music Association of Maine

www.mainebluegrass.org
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