



DESERT BLUEGRASS ASSOCIATION

Newsletter



Grass Clippings

Volume 32 Issue 1

April 2026—May 2026

Message from the (New) President

By John Anderson, DBA President



Hi, everybody. I want to introduce myself. My name is John Anderson, and I am honored to be the newly elected president of the Desert Bluegrass Association. Taking over for Karen Dismachek will be a daunting task! She has been an amazing president and I will do my best to follow in her footsteps and keep the DBA on the course she has set. I will need all of your help, guidance, and support along the way. Please feel free to reach out to me anytime with ideas and suggestions. It will be greatly appreciated.

I want to tell you all a little something about me. Then I want to tell you something about you all.

I moved to Tucson a little less than three years ago. I lived in Sacramento, California, for 30 years prior to that. I owned a furniture restoration business and raised a family. It was a good life. My wife and I were getting close to retirement, dreaming of what we might do when that time came. We thought we might buy an RV and travel for a bit. She suddenly passed away in 2021 during the pandemic. The world was shut down. That future we had planned was gone. Three months after my wife passed, my key employee suddenly passed as well. At that point, I realized we are just not guaranteed tomorrow. If there is something you want to do or say, someone or something you want to see, now is the time.

I bought the RV that Doris and I had dreamed of. I began traveling, wandering back and forth between my two daughters. One lives on the northern California coast in Eureka, and the other here in Tucson. I knew I would settle down near one of them. I've always loved the desert. I ended up buying a place here, two miles from my oldest daughter. I started rebuilding my life.

I've played guitar since the Beatles were still together, but only on the couch and for my kids. When I moved here, I joined the Tucson Guitar Players Meet Up. I was determined to get over the terror I had of playing in front of people. I got up every month and led a song or two, voice and fingers trembling. But I did it. (I even tried Contra Dancing. But I ain't no Fred Astaire, that's for sure!)

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President's Letter, continued from page 1

I met Eileen Hennessy McFarland and Sheila Scanlan at the Guitar Meet up. Eileen told Sheila and I about the Desert Bluegrass Association. I started going to the workshops. What a life changing decision that turned out to be!

Now let me tell you something about you, The Desert Bluegrass Association (DBA).

You can't talk about the DBA without talking about **Dave Polston**, leader of the workshops and Mastermind of the Festival. Even though I've played guitar since I was twelve, I never really understood how music worked. I've been going to Bluegrass festivals since 1984, but could never fathom how 4 or 5 random musicians could walk up to each other as complete strangers, and play, off like a rocket. It was as if they'd played together all their lives. Dave has opened that window of understanding to many, many people and helped bring us all the joy of playing music together.

Karen Dismachek, President extraordinaire, co-leader of the workshops, singer, fiddle player, guitar player. Always inspiring and super fun to sing with! A truly good and kind human being. Her shoes will be impossible to fill, but I will give it my all. I promise.

The Girl Band. My ultimate heroes. The joy and friendship they display when playing together is inspiring.

Carol and Jerry and Dale and Scotty and all the people that make the workshops happen. Everybody on the DBA Board and the Festival Committee. So much work to keep this all moving forward. All the volunteers that lend a hand, a head, and a heart.

My bandmates, Sheila, Sam, Jon, Ben and Eileen, were the first to jump off that terrifying cliff with me to perform in public as The Late Bloomers. We were graciously accompanied by two members of the Storytellers Band on bass and fiddle for Sunday morning gospel at our 2024 festival. It was an experience I will never forget. Then, The Bloomin' Desert Band, now She 'n Me, The Ranch Dogs, the Grass Fed Band. My life, my kitchen, and my heart are filled to the brim with music and great new friends. I really never imagined my life would go this way. I am so, so grateful to all of you for putting up with me and letting me be a part of your lives.

What I want to do as president: I want to do for others what you all have done for me. I want to bring people together through the joy of playing music. You don't have to be a world class musician.

“I want to do for others what you all have done for me. I want to bring people together through the joy of playing music.”

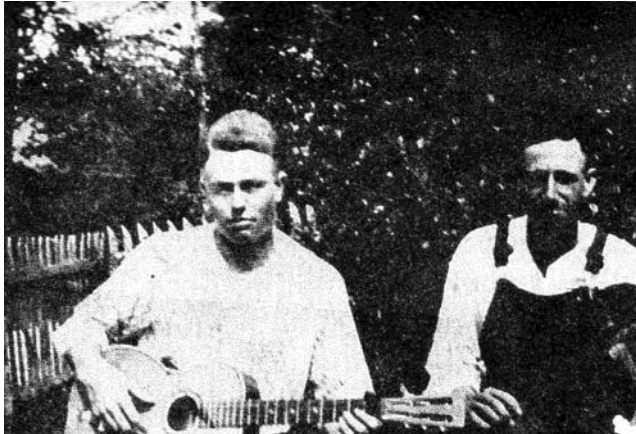
You just need to love it. You don't have to play on the big stage. Just find one other person to play with. Play for your family, for children, for your friends, for your community, for a cause, for a party, on the street corner. Go to a jam. Just make music and share it.

Bluegrass music is American music. Rich in history, unique in its simple structure but endless in variation. Designed to be played together. It creates community. So get together. Find a way to make a difference in this world. Music can open hearts and open doors.

Continued on next page

President's Letter, continued from page 3

I am truly honored to help carry the torch and keep us moving forward. Bluegrass music and the Desert Bluegrass Association truly have deep roots. We are the strong new branches of that family tree.



My Grandpa and my Great Uncle. Probably 1920s Arkansas. My Grandpa taught me how to play Wildwood Flower in 1969. So my love of this music goes way back. It's in my blood, you might say.

Share the music and sing out! If we can sing together, we can live together. It's what we need right now in this world more than ever. Let's roll up our sleeves and get to work. Let's do it together.

See ya at the 2nd Annual Pickin' Picnic on April 25th!!

With a grateful heart,

John Anderson

President

Desert Bluegrass Association

desert.bluegrass.president@gmail.com

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Where will your next musical adventure take you?

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Membership Renewal Reminder

Hi Bluegrass Fans,

In the last issue of *Grass Clippings*, I asked you to **check your membership expiration date** and renew your membership if needed.

The Desert Bluegrass Association uses a common expiration date, and all expirations for the year occur at the end of February. Thanks to everyone who already renewed. However, many have yet to renew. So, take a minute and see if you still need to renew. If you received your *Grass Clippings* electronically, then the e-mail will indicate your membership status. If you received your Grass Clippings in the mail, we included a reminder note if you need to renew.

You may renew either by mail or from our website. To renew by mail simply fill out the form in the newsletter, enclose a check made out to DBA, then mail it to the address listed. If your information is current, you don't even need to fill out the form - just include the mailing address with your payment. To renew from the website, go to www.desertbluegrass.org, look for the "join DBA" area, click the "buy now" button and follow the instructions. Either way is simple and easy.

Renew now to avoid any disruption in your DBA benefits, which include among other things, the bimonthly DBA Newsletter, access to the free Monday workshops and additional Bonus Workshops, and the camaraderie of our wonderful Bluegrass Community.

Thanks,

Mike Headrick
Membership Secretary

Dan Levenson

Arizona Master Artist Awardee



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Welcome to Our New & Returning DBA Members!

Diana Anderson	Tucson	Mark Epstein	Durango, CO
Jeanie Barnett	Tucson	Keith Freedman	Nampa, ID
Don Beaver	Sierra Vista	Jo Ann Gelormine	Tucson
Robert Becker	Oak Park, IL	Ron Jones	Tucson
Michael Boeck	Sandpoint, ID	Beth Judd	Tucson
Ruth Bondi	Berwick, ME	Ingrid McCarty	Tucson
Jim Brown	Mission Viejo, CA	Nadine Nemec	Tucson
Meryl Campbell-Brown	Westcliffe, CO	Michael Purdy	Tucson
Larry Claassen	Tucson	Bethany Skovan	Tucson
Mark Dershaw	Willoughby, OH	Chad Soiseth	Tucson
Janet DeSimone	Mesa	Tom Stockman	Fort Lupton, CO
Doug Duncan	Stanton, MN		



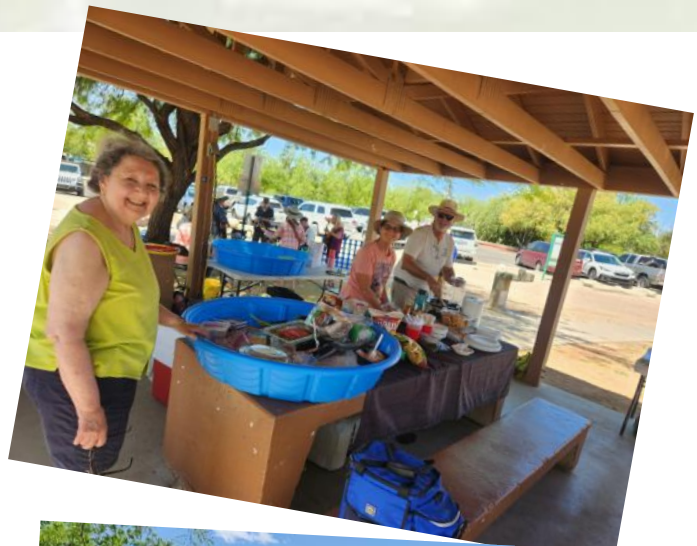
You Won't Want to Miss the
Second Annual DBA Pickin' in the Park

**Saturday, April 25th, from 9 to 5. Come anytime or stay all day.
 Fort Lowell Park, Ramada #5**

We had so much fun last year! Bring your instrument and a dish to share. Find yourself a jam under one of the many shade trees surrounding our perfect little picnic spot.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED! This will be a potluck picnic. We need main dishes, sides, desserts, and drinks.

Let's start a list and get it organized. If you can help setting up, taking down, organizing the potluck, or anything else, send me a text 916-747-4564



Clockwise from top left: **1)** Jamming in the shade. So much fun! **2)** Potluck! Hi, Cookie! To picnic attendees: Let us know what you'd like to bring! We will definitely need lots of ice! **3)** Sound will be provided by Rick Chandler. Open mic during the lunch hour! Get up there and share a few tunes. **4)** Another jam circle. Find your happy spot!



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More Bonus Workshops Coming Your Way

By Suzette Sommerer

The newly revived bonus workshops, many instrument specific, and some on special topics, are proving to be very popular with our members! The DBA is very happy to be offering these workshops to our members once again. These free (to members) workshops are limited in attendance, allowing teachers and students to focus on the skills that both want to work on, and we are taking advantage of both local and touring musicians, offering a wide variety of experiences. And I am thrilled to announce that Chicago Music Store is once again a part of sponsoring these incredibly useful sessions. Thanks to Damon Barnaby and his staff for offering to co-host some of these workshops at their Speedway store and to help compensate the musicians. Those that Chicago Music Store is not involved with will continue to be hosted in private homes around the area.



Anne Luna's Bass Workshop

I've previously reported on Steve Smith's mandolin and guitar workshops, and Anne Luna taught a bass workshop on February 28 for which 14 people signed up (unfortunately, 4 ended up on the waitlist and couldn't attend, so it's worth signing up early). Who even knew that we had 14 bass players in Tucson?

By the time you're reading this, we'll have just finished Andy McCune and Ric Volante's mandolin workshop on March 28, our first at the Chicago Music Store. It's shaping up to be another well attended workshop, with 14 students registered so far. Both Andy and Ric play with The Buckjumpers.

Banjo pickers, you are indeed fortunate this month, because the DBA is offering not one, but two free instrument workshops for you! On April 4, 2-4 pm, Tyler James will be teaching banjo at a private home near Sabino Canyon and River Road. Tyler is the 2008 Rockygrass Banjo Champion and a 2012 Winfield National Banjo Finalist, as well as a California and Arizona Banjo Champion. Tyler grew up in a musical family and began playing banjo at age 16. Over the years, Tyler has played with local bands Headline Bluegrass Band, Crystal Ridge, James Reams and the Barnstormers, and the longest and most current is the Sonoran Dogs. From Australia and New Zealand to Ireland, he has played and taught across the world. Tyler enjoys playing all three styles of 3-finger style banjo and incorporates all three into his style of playing. The Sonoran Dogs just played a terrific set at our festival, and they'll be playing at Monterey Court on April 4, after the workshop.



Tyler James

Continued on next page

Bonus Workshops, continued

BANJO WORKSHOP



**April 25
1-3 pm**

Chicago Music Store
5646 E. Speedway, Tucson
Hosted by
Andy McCune & Tom Poley
facebook.com/Buckjumpers
Free to Desert Bluegrass Association
members; \$20 for non-members. Attendance
is limited so registration is required.
Contact Suzette at s.sommerer@icloud.com

On April 25, 1-3 pm, Andy McCune and Tom Poley will be teaching another banjo workshop at Chicago Music Store's Speedway location. Andy McCune plays regularly with the local bluegrass group The Buckjumpers, and has been teaching banjo, mandolin, dobro, upright bass, and guitar in Tucson for years. He was a long-time member of the iconic Tucson group, the Titan Valley Warheads, and has done numerous workshops for the DBA and at the Tucson Folk Festival. Tom Poley is a founding member of the Tucson groups Out of the Blue and Way Out West. He is also an award-winning songwriter with a special interest in the music of John Hartford. This workshop will range widely into their long and varied musical love affair with the 5-string banjo.

Nick Coventry, an amazingly gifted teacher and fiddler, will be hosting a fiddle workshop at Chicago Music Store May 9, 1-3 pm. Nick started playing at an early age, was classically trained, and fell in love with Stephane Grappelli and Gypsy jazz at age 12. He studied classical music at the University of California Santa Barbara. After making a name for himself worldwide in Gypsy jazz, Nick began exploring other genres. He currently performs with his touring band, Black Market Trust (swing and big band), and a variety of local bands, including the Hot Club of Tucson (Gypsy jazz), the Tucsonics (western swing), Nick McBlaine and Logtrain (bluegrass), and Mama Coal (country). He often sits in with touring bands coming through Tucson and records with artists all over the country. To say that he is versatile would be a gross understatement! His teaching style is gentle but illuminating, and players at all levels can learn a lot from him.



Nick Coventry

Bluegrass Harmony Workshop
With Dede Wyland



Tuesday, April 7th – 6:30 to 8:30 pm
17th Street Music Club
830 E 17th Street, Tucson, AZ 85719
Registration fee: \$50

Learn the fundamentals of bluegrass harmony singing, including how to identify your part and create three and four-part harmonies (lead, tenor baritone and bass). We'll also touch on helpful tips and techniques to enhance your overall sound.

To register, please email dedewyland@gmail.com

Dede Wyland is well known to many of us both for her wonderful singing and songwriting and for her teaching at Camp Bluegrass and here in Tucson. She will be teaching a workshop on the fundamentals of Harmony Singing on Tuesday, April 7, 6:30-8:30 pm at the 17th St. Music Club, 830 E 17th Street. Unfortunately, this one came together after both the times and the budget for March and April DBA free bonus workshops had already been committed. Dede will therefore be offering this workshop on her own, and will be charging \$50 per person for the 2-hour event. To register, contact Dede directly via email, dedewyland@gmail.com.

Contact [Suzette Sommerer](#) to sign up for the DBA and DBA/Chicago Music Store workshops. Please be specific about which workshop you'd like to attend. We will accommodate as many students as possible, but are keeping the class sizes small

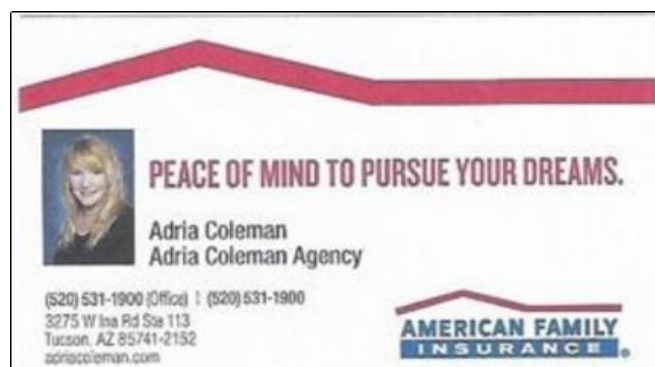
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Bonus Workshops, continued


to ensure enough room and to allow for more individualized instruction. Non-DBA members are welcome, but they will be asked to either join or to make a \$20 contribution.

Here is a summary of the upcoming workshops:


<p>Bonus Instrument Workshops Contact Suzette Sommerer to register</p>
<p>Banjo – Saturday, April 4 Tyler James 2-4 pm @ private home Limit – 16 students</p>
<p>Banjo – Saturday, April 25 Andy McCune & Tom Poley 1-3 pm @ Chicago Music Store 5646 E Speedway Limit – 20 students</p>
<p>Fiddle – Saturday May 9 Nick Coventry 1-3 pm @ Chicago Music Store 5646 E Speedway Limit – 20 students</p>
<p>Bluegrass Harmony Workshop With Dede Wyland, April 7 6:30-8:30 pm @ 17th St. Music Club 830 E 17th St. Cost: \$50/person To register contact Dede directly at dedewyland@gmail.com</p>



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Desert Bluegrass Association's Turquoise Award

Each year, at our annual Desert Bluegrass Festival, we honor an individual who has devoted their time and energy to the preservation and growth of our association. This year's recipient is **Marshall Vest**, and the acknowledgment of his work and devotion is long overdue. He has spent 20-plus years working for the betterment of our bluegrass community.

I met Marshall almost 20 years ago when I first began playing banjo. The Monday night workshop at that time was held at Udall Center and on average had about six or seven people. I was a total newbie and Marshall was a kind soul who took me under his wing. He showed me lots of things to help with my banjo pickin'. His wonderful wife, Betty, would cook me dinner every Tuesday night before Marshall and I would work on banjo stuff. He and his family became very dear friends.

Marshall has contributed many things to the Desert Bluegrass Association, including hosting bands and workshops at his home, and working to better the Monday night workshop as it grew from 6 people to 60 people each week. He has also been instrumental in creating a venue for bluegrass players to perform and teach at the 17th Street Event Center.

Marshall has touched many lives throughout the years, especially mine. So congratulations to my dear friend and Bluegrass Banjo Brother Marshall Vest. Congratulations! Well deserved.

—*Contributed by Dave Polston*



Marshall Vest (right) receives his Turquoise Award from Dave Polston (left) at the 2026 Desert Bluegrass Association's Bluegrass Festival



Make Sure You're Heard!

Does your band have a gig lined up? Or are you playing regularly and want to make sure your audience knows where to find you? Check out these three websites and get yourself listed: TucsonLovesMusic.com, TucsonLocalBands.com, and Bandmix.com. The first two emphasize audience members finding upcoming events in Tucson: both have calendars and also support musician bios and band listings. Bandmix seems slightly more oriented toward musicians or others finding musicians. Check them out and get playing!

— *Contributed by Cathy Larson*

Desert Bluegrass Festival

March 13 – 15, 2026

By Karen Dismachek

Wow, after all the prep and anticipation, I can't believe it has come and gone already! What a great festival this year! Unlike last year, the weather cooperated and was about as good as we could ask for. Friday was a little warm, but it was breezy from time to time which cooled things off a bit, and we had plenty of water and shade, so all was good.

Friday we started with a **Band Contest**, and the bands did a great job! We had a good turnout, 8 bands in all. They were the Never Flats; Ranch Dogs; Broke Down Boys; Double Take; G's, C's & D's Music Collective; Poverty Gulch; The Breitenbach Family; and High Desert Bluegrass. Congratulations to all who participated!



The crowd enjoying the Festival under our beautiful Tucson sky

Being in a contest is loads of fun, and a bit of pressure as you are truly being judged, but it is a great incentive for honing your band's skills and musicality. The prizes were awarded to **The Breitenbach Family**, **High Desert Bluegrass**, and the **G's C's & D's Music Collective**. There were cash prizes for the winners, so if you are in a band, think about entering your band next year!



Band contest winners the Breitenbach Family



Band contest winners High Desert Bluegrass



Band contest winners the G's, C's and D's Music Collective (left). Congratulations to all who participated!

Continued on next page

Desert Bluegrass Festival, continued

Next was a **Band Scramble**. A band scramble is when the musicians participating put their name in a container labeled with the name of the instrument they play. There is one container for each bluegrass instrument. Then the person running the scramble picks a name from each container and creates a band out of random people. Some know each other, some have never met. It is so much fun! They get literally minutes to pick a song and practice for about 5 minutes. Then they are called up on stage to play. Another fun thing is they need to think of a name for themselves. We had 9 groups this time. Their names were: Red Rocks and Bluegrass, The Belly Burners, Funk Deficient, The Quickies, The Honey Bees, Marana Bananas, Peace Dog, The Tucson Toasters, Last Chicken Standing. Great names! There are also prizes for the top-ranking scramble bands, and our winners were Last Chicken Standing, The Honey Bees and The Tucson Toasters. Congratulations to them, but really, kudos to all who participated!! Y'all looked like you were having a great time, and so was the audience, they were enthusiastically cheering you guys on! (and helping with band name ideas when necessary!). 😊

I also must mention the great job the **Jennifer Johnson** did Emceeding the Band Contest and Band Scramble. She is very entertaining and sometimes I think she missed her calling in stand up. But I would never want to lose her as a bandmate, so don't take me up on that, Jen. (She was also running the front gate and overseeing the volunteers BTW, a real trooper!)

Friday night we got to listen to **Dave Polston's band Monsoon Sky**. They killed it. Great job, you guys! They also stayed and played for the Contra Dance afterwards with the addition of two fiddlers. (Thank you,



Contra dancers do-si-do above (great job, Suzette!) and left.

Corrine Garey and **Danielle Bettencourt** for stepping up; I really enjoyed your fiddling!). I didn't dance, but I watched, finally having a chance to kick back. I cover miles of ground during the festival, but I'm not complaining — it is a labor of love. It was sooo fun to watch the dancers. You could tell they were just having a ball; there were a number of people dancing in bare feet. (That shows you how nice the fields are that our festival is on and how comfortable the temperature was). **Abbie Sorg** called the dance and is an experienced caller, so it was especially fun listening to her.

She was very entertaining and people were catching on fast to the dance moves. She also calls dances sometimes at the Arizona Dance Center on 29th Street. If you like Square and Round Dancing check out sardasa.org and <https://tucsoncontradancers.org>. I think the contra dance is fast becoming one of the highlights of our festival.



Continued on next page

Desert Bluegrass Festival, continued

After the dance there was lots of jamming going on in the campground and the weather was a very nice temperature for that. The same went for Saturday night. Speaking of camping, we had over 80 campers in the dry camping area this year, more than last year. **Jeff Collins**, thank you so much for setting up and managing the campground. And there were quite a few tents in the tent camping area as well. It's a blast to jam with people that you have just met and make new friends. One of the many things I love about bluegrass music.

Besides the music, there were a lot of **great vendors** this year. I did a **lot** of shopping! Goodies like jams and jellies, sour dough bread, and salsa. Trinkets and gifts, jewelry, beautiful drinking vessels, and a great selection of hats. **Dave** and **Trish** were also there with their craft booth **Bluegrass Heaven** with very creative 3d-printed stuff. We had a great selection of vendor booths with lots of variety to choose a festival memento from. There were great food vendors, too. West Coast Trolley had a tasty wide selection of items. The fish tacos from La Bufadora were awesome! We had great BBQ on Saturday, but due to technical difficulties, they weren't able to be there on Sunday, but I did get an awesome pulled pork sandwich from them on Saturday! Thanks to **John Anderson** for a great line-up of vendors!

Our **DBA Booth** and **Festival T-shirt Booth** did quite well with sales this year. It seems that this year's festival design was quite popular. Thanks to **Mike Nitido** for working on the design! It's early yet, so we haven't crunched the numbers, but the **Raffle** and **Silent Auction booths** seem to have had quite a bit of traffic, too. Thanks to all who donated instruments, and thanks to **Holly Trip** for donating supplies and setting up the silent auction booth.



It looked like the kids had a great time at the **Kid's Zone** booth, though they are a bit to handle sometimes, right, **Eileen**? But thank you for managing that booth, it is a great addition to the festival.

Thanks to both our Kids Booth and the family-friendly nature of our Festival, all "kids" (older and younger alike), can express their general joie de vivre by dancing anytime, any place!



Tent campers enjoying one of our fantastic sunsets



Our vendor row at yet another awesome sunset



Our fabulous 2026 t-shirt design!

Continued on next page

Desert Bluegrass Festival, continued

I peeked into the **Green Room** a few times and the bands looked happy and things looked organized. Thank you, **Matt Teller**, for managing it. Thank you, too, **Chris Pendelton** for donating the special beverages. Thanks to all who donated drinks and snacks for the Green Room, too. It is very important to have happy bands at a festival!

On Saturday the weather was great again. It was a little bit more overcast and the day was a little cooler. We started with the national anthem sung by the **Jam Pak** kids; they are so adorable and such good singers, too! They were followed by our band line-up for the morning: **Old Pueblo Bluegrass**, **Greg & Randal Morton**, and **Forest Thurman & Breakline**. There were **Workshops** from 1:00 – 2:00 then, bands resumed with **Ten Dollar Wedding**, **Crying Uncle**, **Chicken Wire Empire** and the **Sonoran Dogs**. Old Pueblo Bluegrass, Greg & Randal Morton and Sonoran Dogs are all local musicians from the Tucson area. A lot of you reading this have probably seen their many performances around town. We were so pleased to be able to feature local talent at our festival. I love all those people, and it was a pleasure to get to meet Randal Morton, as well, as he is from outside our area.



The colorful Jam Pak kids



Old Pueblo Bluegrass clearly having a good time on stage



Randal & Greg Morton have played together since 1969



Forest Thurman & Breakline playing their award-winning bluegrass



The Festival crowd knows: they're hearing the best Bluegrass music for miles around!

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Desert Bluegrass Festival, continued

In addition to our local bands, our bands from farther out did not disappoint either. Our friends Ten Dollar Wedding, from just up north near Phoenix sounded awesome; it's been a pleasure hearing them over the last several years and I can hear how their hard work is paying off! I love Chicken Wire Empire and Crying Uncle, they are both awesome too! Chicken Wire Empire is all the way from Wisconsin, and I hope they visit our area more often. Crying Uncle is from California and it's great to see such young people playing so well. I have seen them several times over that past two years and every time I see them they are better and better musically, and they have a great stage presence.



Top-rated Arizona band Ten Dollar Wedding



Crying Uncle giving it their all



Contemporary bluegrass band Chicken Wire Empire



The Sonoran Dogs are always a crowd-pleasing favorite

Because of my duties I had to run around a lot doing things during the festival, but I was able to listen to the bands as they played and they all were totally on and in their groove, in my opinion. The crowd was clapping and cheering, and I saw more than one standing ovation after a set. I was so impressed with all the bands all weekend, from start to finish. I want to thank them all for participating in our festival!



The five workshops at midday on Saturday were Guitar with **Forest Thurman**; Advanced Guitar with **Greg Morton**; Banjo with **Randal Morton, Alvin Blaine**, and more; Pre-Beginner Slow Jam with **Chicken Wire Empire**; and Songwriting with **Peter McLaughlin**. All were well attended and I heard great things about them afterwards. Thank you to all the artists that taught at the workshops!

The Banjo Workshop was one of several workshops offered

Continued on next page

Desert Bluegrass Festival, continued



During this time for those gridders or pickers not interested in a workshop, we had two DBA showcase bands play to keep the music going. Thanks to the **Ranch Dogs** and **G's C's & D's Music Collective** for keeping the entertainment going and showing two great examples of the Bluegrass bands that often spin out from our DBA members.

The Ranch Dogs keep the music going

Sunday started with the national anthem, and what we call the **Gospel Open Mic**. This is a chance for anyone who wants to sign up to put together a group of any size, or just do it alone and perform a gospel tune or two. It's a great way to start Sunday and it gives people a chance to have the being-on-stage experience. Thanks to all who participated in this. You all did great getting up there and starting our day!



Feeling it at the Sunday Gospel Open Mic

After the Open Mic our main band line-up started. First was the **Jam Pak** group—they are so cool, all those kids learning and performing music and other life skills. It warms the heart and brings the good tears. They are from an organization called Jam Pak Blues 'N' Grass Neighborhood Band. It is a non-profit organization that does wonderful things for kids. It's run by Anni Beach. (Anni, I missed seeing you this year.) You can find out more about it at jampak.org.

The bands on Sunday included **Nick McBlaine & Logtrain**, **Crying Uncle**, **MohaviSoul**, and **Chicken Wire Empire**. Nick McBlaine & Logtrain are a great local bluegrass band. (Their fiddler, **Nick Coventry**, happens to be my fiddle teacher. Another 20 years and I'll sound just like him.) You can also see them the first Wednesday of the month at Monterey Court. I really like MohaviSoul's classic, contemporary, California bluegrass style; they were a nice addition to our bluegrass line up. Lastly, our headliner on Sunday was Chicken Wire Empire, what a way to close the festival! I noticed that the crowd pretty much stayed to the very end of the last band, and the band played some encore songs as well. People didn't leave until they were done—always a great sign. Again, thanks to all the bands that played over the weekend: you were present, on it, and in the groove, there was no phoning it in going on. Many thanks to **Russ Barnard** for assembling such a great band lineup! I enjoyed every moment of music I heard!



Nick McBlaine & Logtrain (left) and MohaviSoul (right) on the Sunday stage.

Continued on next page

Desert Bluegrass Festival, continued

Also on Sunday we presented **Marshall Vest** with the **Annual Turquoise Award**. Congratulations Marshall! Marshall is a long-time member and has always been a supportive asset to the organization. Read more about it in Dave Polston's article in this newsletter on page 12.

It was so gratifying to see all the smiling faces and dancers out there on the grass, not just for the dance but during band performances too. We had a great turnout this year and it seems like a great time was had by all! I must mention the hard work done by the our publicity wing, **Sam Madison**, **Suzette Sommerer**, **Sheila Scanlan** and **Dale Vickroy**. And thanks to you all for coming to the festival this year. Save the dates for next year, **March 12-14, 2027** — don't miss it. We'll see you there next year! I promise I'll put my order in for good weather like I did for this year. 😊

More Thanks! The festival would not be possible without the hard work of all the people involved. Especially the Festival Committee, they all worked soooo hard! I would like to name them:

John Anderson
Russ Barnard
Rick Chandler
Jeff Collins
Lou Courtney
Karen Dismachek
Eileen Farland

Cookie Johannessen
Jennifer Johnson
Sam Madison
Doug McMaster
Mike Nitido
Dave Polston
Chris Pendelton

Sheila Scanlan
Suzette Sommerer
Matt Teller
Holly Tripp
Dale Vickroy

Let's hear it for Desert Bluegrass Festival Committee 2026 !!!

Also thanks to **Mike Headrick**, photography; **Dennis Dismachek**, videography; **Alvin Blaine**, sound (not just sound, but great sound!); **Dave Poston**, emcee; and **Mark Jukich**, emcee.

And thanks to all who signed up to volunteer. You all did a wonderful job and you are a major reason why this year was so successful!

I must give a shout out to **Marana Parks and Rec** for keeping the fields so nice and staying up with the facilities, trash, lights and irrigation, etc. Thanks for your support of this event! And thanks to **Discover Marana** for supporting us with promotion. You were a big help to us this year, thank you! Check them out at www.discovermarana.org

And finally, thanks to all our sponsors: your contributions and support is helping us to upgrade the festival every year and make it the most enjoyable experience we can for attendees and performers and to spread the love of bluegrass!

If you have an interest in helping with the festival and would like to be on the committee, please email me directly at Karen_Dismachek@yahoo.com (that's an underscore between the n and the d). (Note that the DBA president Gmail account is now monitored by John Anderson.)

See you at the festival next year!

Karen Dismachek
 Festival Director



*Sam and her friends jammin'.
 Come to next year's festival and
 you can jam, too!*



Don't miss next year's Instrument Raffle!



2026 Desert Night Acoustic Music Camps

Kingston, New Mexico

By Karen Dismachek

Registration is now open for the 2026 Desert Night Acoustic Camps at the Black Range Lodge in Kingston, NM, run by Chris Sanders. I have attended many of these camps and they have been some of the most rewarding and transformative musical experiences that I have ever had. The lodge is next to the Gila National Forest in a beautiful setting. It's not too far to go, just a half day's drive from Tucson. The Lodge is overflowing with rustic charm. The food there is



Suzette, me, and Chris!

excellent, too! I have also met some great friends at these music camps.

They are getting very popular, so if you are interested, I would recommend that you register asap! Especially for the songwriting camp, as attendance to that is very limited. Here are this year's camps:



Black Range Lodge

♪ **Desert Night Acoustic Songwriting Camp:** April 30 through May 3. The instructor will be Elliot Rogers and artist in residence will be drummer/producer Eric Boseman.

♪ **DNA Music Summer Camp:** August 19 through August 23. The instructors will be Chris Sanders, Steve Smith, Wil Maring, and Robert Bowlin.

♪ **Desert Night Acoustic Music Camp:** October 8 through October 11. Lots of instructors and instruments here: Steve Smith, Anne Luna, Chris Sanders, Tim May, Tom Adler, Nick Coventry, and Alan Munde. This one is really popular, so sign up as early as possible!

♪ **Southwest Mandolin Camp:** October 28 through November 1. Your instructors will be Steve Smith, Tim May, K.C. Groves, Marla Fibish, and Don Julin.



Faculty Concert Night

These are wonderful music camps! You can find out all the details about each one, where to register for the camp and how to book in the lodge at <https://dnamusiccamp.com/>.



IN MEMORIAM



ANDY WALLACH

(April 3, 1953 – January 28, 2026)

Andy Wallach, a popular bass picker in DBA circles, died on January 28, 2026 after a hard-fought battle with pulmonary fibrosis. Andy was raised in the Bronx, but his love of adventure and backpacking brought him to the North Carolina mountains in his early 20's, where he fell in love with old-time music, bluegrass, and the stand-up bass. He settled in North Carolina to raise a family of three girls and start his small business. There he spent over 35 years as an ASE Certified Master Mechanic. In retirement, Andy split his time between Tucson, AZ and Brevard, NC. His love of hiking, biking, and music jams kept him busy in both places. It was in Arizona that he met the love of his life, his wife Tina. They started traveling back and forth together "snowbirding."

My earliest memories of Andy in Tucson were of him playing bass at a DBA jam at the Sticks & Strings music store in 2015. Andy was playing a smaller bass but he quickly upgraded when Bob Nibel's big, blond, 5-string bass became available. This was the instrument on which Bonnie Lohman learned to play the bass. Andy bought it and played it for the rest of his life. In 2016, Andy organized the Far Horizon Jam which continued until 2024. Andy quickly became a popular bass player in jams, workshops and local bands. One of his favorite bands was High Lonesome with Chip Thomason, John McCann, and Bill Paul. They performed at our 2020 Desert Bluegrass Festival – yeah, the one at the start of COVID. They did a great job of filling in when other bands had to cancel. On their "My Radio" cd, Andy got to record one of his favorite songs "I Don't Know How It Happened." In his obituary, his daughters wrote: "When we think about who Andy was, most of us will remember a smiling, bearded face plucking away at a stand-up bass and singing out the melody in a deep, gruff voice."

Rest in peace Andy. We miss you.



We imagine an Arizona where everyone can participate in and experience the arts

An agency of the State of Arizona



CLASSIFIEDS

Instruments

Instruments For Sale: Knilling Fiddle 4/4 size -with hsc - \$450; The Loar Mandolin (modern) w/ semi hard case - \$450; Mandolin - Breedlove Crossover with hsc - \$550. All in like new condition. Call or text Dan Levenson at 412-551-0933, or email Clawdan1@gmail.com.

2003 Martin HD-28 Guitar with LR Baggs Dual Source Pickup. Very good condition. Hard-shell case included. \$2,100. Tom Carpenter 520-488-8185.

Services, Instruction, and More

Video photography of your band. I provide videos of your band's performance so that you can advertise your group when applying to festivals or shows. I charge \$150/hour for non-members and \$75/hour for DBA members, which includes the full video and song cuts. I have been providing band videos from the DBA festivals in Marana for the past few years and indoor performances by request. Dennis Dismachek, ddismachek@hotmail.com, 520-729-0806

El Rio Violino

Repair of violin-family instruments, bow rehairing, violins for sale. Call Marc Rennard directly at 314-313-0318 (located on west side of Tucson).

Tucson Manual and Movement Therapy

Specializing in back, neck, shoulder, and hip pain. Said services are excellent for reducing pain, improving joint mobility, and calming the central nervous system. Owned and operated by Jarrod Lash since 1999. Descendingdragoncommunity.com // 520-404-4869

Ready to jump into the Bluegrass scene or take your playing to the next level? With over 12 years of teaching experience, this skilled instructor offers lessons in Bluegrass jamming, jam etiquette, and individual instruction on Guitar, Mandolin, Dobro, and Banjo. Whether you're brand new or already picking, all ages and skill levels are welcome. Learn how to confidently join a jam, play with others, and truly enjoy the music. Flexible scheduling available, and travel can be arranged if needed. Call or text 520-245-6126 or email Davepolston@yahoo.com to get started.

NEWSLETTER ADVERTISING PRICES

1/4 PAGE:	\$25 PER ISSUE, \$100 ANNUAL	1/2 PAGE:	\$40 PER ISSUE, \$160 ANNUAL
FULL PAGE:	\$60 PER ISSUE \$240 ANNUAL	CLASSIFIED AD:	\$5 FOR 5 LINES OR LESS*

*DBA Members Free, Space Permitting

Want to place an ad or need more info? Contact Cathy at cathy_2545@yahoo.com

DBA Calendar for Jams & Workshops

For the most current information and last-minute schedule changes to the DBA's jams etc., check the online calendar at: [https://calendar.google.com/calendar/u/0/embed?](https://calendar.google.com/calendar/u/0/embed?src=nqkrtso1l4nrj6glt1uth4ifl4@group.calendar.google.com&ctz=America/Phoenix)

[src=nqkrtso1l4nrj6glt1uth4ifl4@group.calendar.google.com&ctz=America/Phoenix](https://calendar.google.com/calendar/u/0/embed?src=nqkrtso1l4nrj6glt1uth4ifl4@group.calendar.google.com&ctz=America/Phoenix).

Notes

- Monday Workshops are in full swing. Check the calendar for changes due to holidays and other events.
- Some events will change due to holidays or switch to summer hours. Check the [calendar](#)!

General Schedule and Location Info

SUNDAYS

- ◆ First and third Sundays, 1:30 pm to 3:30 pm, Jam @ **Morris K. Udall Regional Park**, 7200 E. Tanque Verde Rd., Tucson. Outside the Udall Rec Center.
- ◆ Second Sundays: 1:00 – 3:30 pm, Jam @ **17th St. Music Club**. 830 E. 17th St., Tucson. Use the entrance at the wheelchair ramp under the Tucson Party Rentals awning.
- ◆ Fourth Sundays, 4:00 – 6:00 pm, Jam @ **Thirsty's** Neighborhood Bar & Grill, 2422 N. Pantano Rd, Tucson.

MONDAYS

- ◆ Mondays, 6:30 – 8:30 pm. Workshop @ **St. Francis in the Foothills** United Methodist Church, 4625 E. River Rd, Tucson. Turn right as you enter the property from River Road to find the Community Room. See signs. **Note: Annual DBA Membership meeting 6:00—6:30 pm on Monday, Feb. 2.**

THURSDAYS

- ◆ Third Thursdays: 2:00 – 4:00 pm, Jam @ **Trail Dust Town**. 6541 E. Tanque Verde Rd, Tucson. Meet by the gazebo at Trail Dust Town.
- ◆ Fourth Thursdays: 10 am – 12noon, Jam @ **Comanche Wells**. 775 W. Roger Rd., #227, Tucson. The gates will open at 9:30 am. The jam is in the Clubhouse. This is a beginner friendly jam for all levels of players.

SATURDAY

- ◆ April 25 only, Don't miss the **2nd Annual Pickin' in the Park**, Ft. Lowell Park, 2900 N. Craycroft Rd., Tucson. Meet at Ramada 5. RSVP to John, johna2u55@gmail.com

See the next page for the DBA's day-by-day calendar of jams and workshops.
But be sure to check the [DBA online calendar](#) for last-minute changes!

DBA Calendar, *continued*

April 2026

<u>Day</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Event & Location</u>	<u>Contact</u>
Sunday	Apr 5	1:30 – 3:30 pm	Jam @ Udall Park	Mike 520-403-0168
Monday	Apr 6	6:30 – 8:30 pm	Meeting & Wkshop, St. Francis	DBAmondaysworkshop@gmail.com
Sunday	Apr 12	1:00 – 3:30 pm	Jam @ 17th Street Music Club	Greg Morton 520-979-7048 gmorton43@yahoo.com
Monday	Apr 13	6:30 – 8:30 pm	Workshop @ St. Francis	DBAmondaysworkshop@gmail.com
Thursday	Apr 16	2:00 – 4:00 pm	Jam @ Trail Dust Town	Bonnie (520) 349-4812
Sunday	Apr 19	1:30 – 3:30 pm	Jam @ Udall Park	Mike 520-403-0168
Monday	Apr 20	6:30 – 8:30 pm	Workshop @ St. Francis	DBAmondaysworkshop@gmail.com
Thursday	Apr 23	10 am – 12 noon	Jam @ Comanche Wells	John 520-261-5645 or Vicki 520-351-1644
Saturday	Apr 25	9 am – 5 pm	Pickin' in the Park @ Ft. Lowell Park, Ramada 5	johna2u55@gmail.com
Sunday	Apr 26	4:00 – 6:00 pm	Jam @ Thirsty's	Bonnie (520) 349-4812
Monday	Apr 27	6:30 – 8:30 pm	Workshop @ St. Francis	DBAmondaysworkshop@gmail.com

☀ May 2026 ☀

<u>Day</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Event & Location</u>	<u>Contact</u>
Sunday	May 3	1:30 – 3:30 pm	Jam @ Udall Park	Mike 520-403-0168
Monday	May 4	6:30 – 8:30 pm	Workshop @ St. Francis	DBAmondaysworkshop@gmail.com
Sunday	May 10	1:00 – 3:30 pm	Jam @ 17th Street Music Club	Greg Morton 520-979-7048
Monday	May 11	6:30 – 8:30 pm	Workshop @ St. Francis	DBAmondaysworkshop@gmail.com
Sunday	May 17	1:30 – 3:30 pm	Jam @ Udall Park	Mike 520-403-0168
Monday	May 18	6:30 – 8:30 pm	No workshop	DBAmondaysworkshop@gmail.com
Thursday	May 21	2:00 – 4:00 pm	Jam @ Trail Dust Town	Bonnie (520) 349-4812
Sunday	May 24	4:00 – 6:00 pm	Jam @ Thirsty's	Bonnie (520) 349-4812
Monday	May 26	—	NO WORKSHOP	DBAmondaysworkshop@gmail.com
Thursday	May 28	10 am – 12 noon	Jam @ Comanche Wells	John 520-261-5645 or Vicki 520-351-1644



Udall Jam in September 2023

TO INSTRUCTORS & BANDS



Would you like your services, band, and/or concerts listed on our website, at www.desertbluegrass.org? Current DBA members can be listed by sending their contact information to Dale Lynne Vickroy at DesertBluegrassWebmaster@gmail.com. Refer to the "Links" tab on the homepage to view current band and instructor information. We have added a second calendar to the website for other (non-DBA sponsored) concerts and events. If you are a member of a band, and have a gig scheduled that you would like added to that calendar, send me the date, time, address and band contact info. You may also include a link to your band's website or to a special event flyer.

BANDS

The Badly Bent

Mark Epstein 970-946-6345 (voice and text) or (970) 385-7998 (voice)
banjo@thebadlybent.com
<https://www.thebadlybent.com/>

Cabin John Bluegrass

Bookings: Anni Beach 480-963-6811
annibeach1@gmail.com
 Web: Howard Anderson 480-897-7425
handy31@mindspring.com
www.cabinjohnbluegrass.com

Cisco and the Racecars

Francisco Briseno 520-251-7183
lilcisco92@gmail.com

Dan Levenson and The Cat Mountain Rounders

Dan Levenson 412-551-0933
clawdan1@gmail.com
www.ClawDan.com

FRESH APPLES

Doc & Meryl 602-618-6285
theFRESHAPPLESband@gmail.com
www.theFRESHAPPLESband.com

Jam Pak Blues 'N' Grass Neighborhood Band

Anni Beach 480-963-6811
annibeach1@gmail.com
www.jampak.org

Just Plain Folk

Rob Wright 520-370-4843
tradbanjo@comcast.net

Linda Lou & The Desert Drifters

Linda Lou 520-444-9897
[Facebook.com/desertdrifters](https://www.facebook.com/desertdrifters)

North of Lonesome

Alan Lister 623-692-8620
alister377@gmail.com
www.NorthofLonesome.com
 Facebook: North of Lonesome Bluegrass

Ocotillo Rain

Jeff Collins 520-403-4062
 Holly Tripp 520-241-8421
Ocotillorain.blogspot.com

Old Pueblo Bluegrass Band

Reid Griffin 520-349-4321
manzanitabluegrass@comcast.net
www.facebook.com/theoldpueblobluegrassband/

Permafrost Road

Ken Brown
 801 W. Limberlost, Unit P
 Tucson, AZ 85705
 (907) 378-6542
kenbrown44444@gmail.com

Peter McLaughlin

520-247-1027
www.petermclaughlin.info

The Sonoran Dogs

Peter McLaughlin 520-247-1027
www.thesonorandogs.com

String Creek

Janet Dodd 509-701-0901
Jdoutback2@gmail.com
 Brett Dodd 509-216-1002
Brettd1@msn.com
 Rick Chandler 616-540-9066
rchan7954@gmail.com
www.facebook.com/BrettandJanetDoddDuo/

Ten Dollar Wedding

Chris Doyle 602-315-0615
chris.doyle@cox.net
www.facebook.com/tendollarwedding
[instagram.com/tendollarwedding](https://www.instagram.com/tendollarwedding)

Way Out West

Emmy Creigh 520-323-0704
www.bluebhikku.com/WayOutWest.htm



Learn to play and come to the DBA jams! Or, start your own band, like these folks did!!
 From left: Monsoon Sky, Notorious No-Gig Girl Band, Ocotillo Rain

INSTRUCTION

Chris Brashear

413-687-8350
www.chrisbrashear.info

Nick Coventry

Fiddle, mandolin, guitar, ukulele
 805-252-1851
ncoventry@gmail.com

Reid Griffin

Guitar Instruction All levels and styles
 (520) 349-4321

Dan Levenson

Old Time fiddle, old-time guitar,
 and clawhammer banjo
Clawdan1@gmail.com
 412-551-0933
www.Clawdan.com

Andy McCune

Bluegrass & clawhammer banjo, mandolin,
 guitar, dobro, & bass
 520-869-6818

Peter McLaughlin

Flatpick & bluegrass guitar: Beginner &
 advanced 520-247-1027

Dave Polston

Banjo, guitar, and dobro lessons
 520-245-6126

Marc Rennard

Fiddle, mandolin, and guitar
 314-313-0318
cramdranner@yahoo.com
 Expert repairs – Violin, Viola, Cello, Bass, Fretted
 Instruments – and Bow Repair

GREAT WEBSITES

Desert Bluegrass Association

www.desertbluegrass.org

Arizona Bluegrass Association

www.arizonabluegrass.com

Bluegrass Arizona Blog

www.bluegrassarizona.blogspot.com

Bluegrass Backing Tracks (Free)

www.fbbts.com/

Bluegrass Lyrics

bluegrasslyrics.com/

Bluegrass Tablature

www.alltabs.com/bluegrass_tabs.php

Daily Dose of Bluegrass

www.bluegrassonthetube.com

Banjo:

www.banjohangout.org

Bass:

www.bluegrassbassplace.com

Dobro:

www.reso-nation.org
www.resohangout.com

Fiddle:

www.fiddlehangout.com

Guitar:

www.bluegrassguitar.com/

Mandolin:

www.mandohangout.com/
www.mandolincafe.com/

OTHER JAMS & OPEN MICS

Below is the previous list of selected other, non-DBA-related jams.

Check local contacts for current and future scheduling. Some jams may no longer be running or may have changed schedules and/or locations.

Casa Grande Airport Jam

1st & 3rd Saturday, 12:00 pm.
Casa Grande Municipal Airport, 3225 N Lear Ave. Casa Grande Az. Acoustic stringed instruments only, NO Amps, Bluegrass songs preferred.
Contact Steve Hartwell
steve@arizonabluegrass.com

Southern AZ Old Time Fiddlers Association

Unitarian Universalist Church
4831 E 22nd St, Tucson
Tuesday 6:30—8:30pm
Info: Wilbur 520-743-7086

Sierra Vista, Kitchen Table Traditional Bluegrass Jam,

Every Tuesday from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm. South Sierra Vista off Highway 92. Mile Post 327. Traditional bluegrass instruments only. No electrics, no strats, no drums, no country, and please no kazoos. Calls only, no text. Call Larry at 520-255-0853 for info; leave a message if I miss your call. Bluegrass just for fun!

ASSOCIATIONS

Arizona Bluegrass Association

118 Sardina Court
Rio Rico AZ, 85648
Mark Jukich, Chairman
markj@arizonabluegrass.com
218-390-7342
www.arizonabluegrass.com

International Bluegrass Music Association (IBMA)

4206 Gallatin Pk.
Nashville, TN 37216
Phone 615-256-3222 | Toll Free 1-888-438-4262
Email info@ibma.org | <https://ibma.org/>

Bluegrass Music Hall of Fame & Museum

311 West Second St.
Owensboro, KY 42301
270-926-7891
888-MY BANJO (toll-free)
www.bluegrasshall.org/

Arizona Old Time Fiddlers Association

696 S Maricopa
Chino Valley, AZ 86323
www.arizonaoldtimefiddlers.org/index.html

Arizona Old Time Fiddlers Association, Southern Arizona Chapter

3020 W. Avenida Cresta
Tucson, AZ 85745
Info: Wilbur 520-743-7086

Southwest Old Time String Band Association

swotgathering.com/
Tucson Friends of Traditional Music
www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100063583240762
tucsoncontradancers.org/

Tucson Kitchen Musicians Association

www.tucsonfolkfest.org/about-tkma/
www.tucsonfolkfest.org/
www.facebook.com/TucsonFolkFest/

Desert Bluegrass Association

April 2026—May 2026

Volume 32 Issue 1



www.DesertBluegrass.org

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION / RENEWAL FORM

Membership dues for the Desert Bluegrass Association are \$20 annually per family and are due March 1st. Members joining after September 1 of any year will have their memberships extended through the next year. Those joining before September 1 must renew the following March 1st.

FIRST NAME: _____ LAST NAME _____

STREET ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

HOME PHONE: _____ CELL PHONE: _____

E-MAIL ADDRESS: _____

Do you wish to be included in the Membership Directory? (Check one) YES NO

What instruments do you play? BANJO BASS FIDDLE GUITAR MANDOLIN

RESONATOR GUITAR OTHER _____

Complete this form then mail it, along with your personal check or money order payable to Desert Bluegrass Association to:

Mike Headrick (DBA Membership Secretary)
13308 E Placita el Algodon
Tucson, AZ 85749