

BLUEGRASS & OLD-TIME MUSIC GUIDE

DOWN THE ROAD

MURPHY CAMPBELL

Channeling the Past
Through Music

JACK OF
THE WOOD

CHEROKEE LANGUAGE
REPERTORY CHOIR

EARL SCRUGGS
FESTIVAL

UPSTREAM
REBELLION
FINDS THEIR
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2026-2027

blue ridge
MUSIC TRAILS
of North Carolina

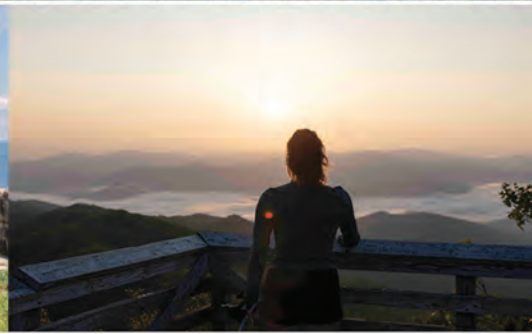
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ON THE COVER:

Murphy Campbell, born in the foothills and mountains of Western North Carolina, taps into the essence of her ancestors. Through ballad singing and banjo playing, she shares the sounds of the past.

TIM DUFFY PHOTO

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IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:



BLUE RIDGE MUSIC TRAILS OF NORTH CAROLINA

Traditional music is flourishing across many parts of America, but in the mountains and foothills of North Carolina, more so than elsewhere, the music is part of the fabric of community life.

Music traditions continue to be handed down in families and communities; at the same time, musicians are moving here from other parts of the country to be at the heart of these wonderful traditions.

You'll find lots of folks making music — from seasoned, master musicians and enormously talented youngsters to exuberant beginners and dedicated back porch pickers.

Most importantly, the music here is to be shared. Opportunities to listen in and to join in are plentiful.

THE PROJECT

The Blue Ridge Music Trails of North Carolina is an initiative led by the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area Partnership, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

Many, many partners across Western North Carolina — arts councils, tourism agencies, music venues, event organizers, musicians, and dancers — are participating in the effort.

The Blue Ridge National Heritage Area's "Down the Road" magazine is produced in collaboration with The Smoky Mountain News. ©2026/27

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FROM THE DIRECTOR

Welcome to the eighth edition of Down the Road, the official magazine from the Blue Ridge Music Trails. This guide is designed to help you find your way through the small towns and back roads of Western North Carolina's Blue Ridge mountains and foothills to discover the depth and breadth of traditional music styles in the region.

The Blue Ridge Music Trails is a collection of more than 255 venues, festivals, and jam sessions across a 29-county region where you will hear a vast array of musical styles, from old-time, bluegrass, and gospel to blues, ballad singing, and Cherokee music and dance. You'll find captivating storytellers and lively dancers.

The roots of American music and dance run deep in the Southern Appalachian Mountains. Our region continues to be a fertile ground for Cherokee, European, and African influences, among others. And the musical landscape continues to grow as emerging artists are mingling to create new rhythms and musical styles.

This issue shares important anniversaries and stories from emerging

musicians now on stage, and is worth your attention. You'll also find a map and comprehensive listing of all Blue Ridge Music Trails sites and their upcoming concerts, festivals, and



activities from now through early 2027. To explore even deeper, visit blueridgemusictrailsonc.com. And visit BlueRidgeHeritage.com to check out

the Traditional Artist Directory, which features more than 400 musicians, dancers, storytellers, and other regional tradition bearers.

Western North Carolina continues to recover from the Fall 2024 impacts of Hurricane Helene, and I urge you to continue to support the work of our talented musicians and venues. Music keeps us alive and helps us connect through the good times and the bad. Please consider donating to Blue Ridge Music Trails. If you love the mountain culture of Western North Carolina, join us in supporting and preserving all that we hold dear. We thank our partner, Smoky Mountain News, and all the advertisers for making this publication possible.

Join us on this musical journey, "Down the Road on the Blue Ridge Music Trails." We look forward to seeing you along the way!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Angie Chandler".

Angie Chandler
Executive Director
Blue Ridge National Heritage Area

SUPPORT THE BLUE RIDGE NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

Play your part in preserving the living traditions and Appalachian heritage of the North Carolina mountains and foothills — including the Blue Ridge Music Trails — with a gift today! Here are several ways you can be a part of this important work for current and future generations:

- Donate at blueridgeheritage.com/about/donate
- Listen to Down the Road Podcasts now featuring seven seasons of traditional music profiles and history; they can be heard at blueridgemusicnc.com, wncw.org, and podomatic.com.
- Visit BlueRidgeNationalHeritage.com to learn more about the heritage of WNC. Explore itineraries for trip ideas, check out upcoming events, and learn about the Blue Ridge Craft Trails.
- Mail donations to Blue Ridge Music Trails Hurricane Relief, 31 College Place, Ste. 20, Asheville, NC 28801

We love connecting with our donors, partners, and program participants. Reach out to us at info@blueridgeheritage.com with questions and comments. We serve the entire region of Western North Carolina.





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BLUFF MOUNTAIN BRINGS MADISON COUNTY, GREATER WNC TOGETHER

Presented by the Madison County Arts Council, the 29th annual Bluff Mountain Festival will return June 13, 2026, on the grounds of the Hot Springs Resort & Spa in Hot Springs.

The gathering features some of the best in Western North Carolina traditional music, dance and song, as well as artist vendors, raffles and community partners. Bring your blankets and lawn chairs for seating in front of the stage and in the shade of elegant magnolias.

The festival was started as a way to publicize and fight the planned logging of Bluff Mountain. After this effort was successful, the event was transformed into a fundraiser for the MCAC and other local nonprofits.

Performers will include the Junior Appalachian Musicians (JAM), Madison County Ballad Singers, Stoney Creek Boys, Whitewater Bluegrass Company, Green Grass Cloggers, Sourwood Ridge, Sarah Kate Morgan & Leo Shannon, Owen Family Band, Nobody's Darling Stringband and more.

This year's festival will be dedicated to the memory of O'Neal Shelton. A man of many talents, O'Neal performed with the Turkey Branch Band and other bands. He served Madison County through work with and leadership in countless community organizations.

"Bluff is a true community event. With an almost three-decade legacy, the festival is something people plan for and a place where the community reconnects," said MCAC Executive Director Brandon Johnson. "We are grateful to be able to present this event in Hot Springs each year, where we can shake hands with friends old and new.

For more information, visit MadisonCountyArts.com.

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The John C. Campbell Folk School is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization
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Murphy Campbell
TIM DUFFY PHOTO

MURPHY CAMPBELL

BRINGING THE PAST TO LIFE

On her 19th birthday in 2025, banjoist Murphy Campbell began tracing a musical lineage that runs deep through Mitchell and Yancey counties. It began as an exploration of her family's heritage that turned into a mission to archive her musical legacy.

"These were interesting people with tales of hardship and woe and love," Campbell said. "They're mighty deserving of being preserved."

Her family crossed paths in the early 1900's with Cecil Sharp, an English collector of folk songs and dances. He traveled through Southern Appalachia

between 1916 and 1918, documenting the region's musical culture. Several of Campbell's family members contributed cherished ballads to Sharp's catalog, which became the book, "English Folk Songs from Appalachia." To Campbell's surprise, many of the songs were collected in 1918 on the same date as her birthday. And with that realization, Campbell's connection to the region's past and present was changed irrevocably.

"I then went on to research each member of my tree with serious intent and managed to unfurl their life sto-

ries," Campbell said. "They were laborers and wanderers who had little to carry but old songs."

Campbell will be recording these ballads with banjo in hand at a historic church in Mitchell County, modern-day interpretations that pay homage to the past and those who were alive back then, all while perpetuating the craft and musical beauty of the songs themselves.

"[The church] sits right under a mile west from where my Mamaw and Papaw are buried and overlooks the area where my family inhabited," Campbell noted. »→





So, what is the original catalyst for her interest in banjo playing and history? Campbell first crossed paths with the five-string instrument when her brother left for college, leaving his banjo behind. Once she picked it up, she started tapping into the history she now embraces and pursues with a deep, genuine passion.

"I view [my brother] as a history keeper — he was always encouraging of embracing our roots," Campbell said of the initial spark to her continued inspiration for music and history.

Peeling back the layers of Western North Carolina's musical history, Campbell began learning and absorbing as many old-time melodies as possible. She even "started playing low-tuned 1800s-style banjos," which were built by Ryan Navey of Midland (Cabarrus County), and "started developing my

own melodic style with the help of thick gut strings." Campbell also points to the Rebels Creek Quartet, a group her grandparents were part of many decades ago.

"I drew a lot of will to become a musician from the [Rebels Creek Quartet] vinyl I have of them," Campbell said. "I also have several ballad singers in my line and some fiddle makers and banjo players, but they've all been dead for quite some time. I try to spend as much time as I can with old-timers. I don't think I'll ever quit being a student of this tradition — I still have a lot to learn."

Where does that old-soul persona within Campbell come from?

"I can thank my raising for my nature. My folks made sure I valued where I came from and knew of the altruism of past generations," Campbell said. "I

think in the present it's easy to forget that humans are pretty elementary creatures that require simplicity."

Campbell remains endlessly curious about how life was lived and how music was created and played generations ago. She also aims to connect dots from the past to the future of what it means to immerse oneself in the intrinsic beauty and essence of being human, no matter what era one grew up in.

"There's a quote from Dillard Chandler, [a] ballad singer of Madison County, that goes 'I recall back instead of going forward. I just do like I do, like I been a-doin' — that sums it up," Campbell said.

In terms of the ballad project and just her life in general as she pushes further and farther down the road of her intent — either geographically, artistically, or spiritually — Campbell views herself as "just a carrier" of these songs, one "who is interpreting and presenting these ballads anew."

"The women and men these ballads came from were majority blood or connected to me by marriage, and I've worked hard to dig up their life stories," Campbell said. "The ballads themselves mean the world, but they captivate when there's a story to connect to them because the people who sang them knew strife — I can't think of a better thing to use my platform or talent towards than ensuring their names and stories are remembered."

Now a stage performer around the region, Campbell said she's "been told by people in the crowd that it seems like I am overcome by something — my hands steady, my heart slows and my eyes take to closing."

"I never feel like I'm doing any work when I'm onstage presenting these fragments of my family history," Campbell said. "My consciousness grows completely silent, and for the time I'm playing, I'm somewhere else."

That sacred realm is also a bitter-sweet feeling for Campbell.

"Because at the end of the day, the place in time that I'm channeling has passed," Campbell said. "It's like trying to get home, and all you can find is rubble, but at least the remnants give you an idea of what once was." —

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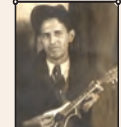
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BLUEGRASS BANJO

EARL SCRUGGS MUSIC FESTIVAL
CELEBRATES FIFTH ANNIVERSARY



For the past five years, the Earl Scruggs Music Festival has drawn people together to celebrate the legacy of bluegrass legend Earl Scruggs. Held every Labor Day weekend at the Tryon International Equestrian Center in Mill Spring (Polk County), the event has become one of the premier bluegrass gatherings in the country.

"There's a deep reverence for Earl and for the vision behind the festival that runs through everyone involved," said Mary Beth Martin. "[And] there's an energy in the air [at the festival] that's hard to describe. It's incredibly gratifying to see something that began as a simple idea grow into something that means so much to so many people."

Martin is the executive director of the Earl Scruggs Center, a renowned museum and cultural hub located just down the road in the heart of Shelby, NC.

"One of the most remarkable things about Earl Scruggs is how humble and genuine he was, even though he changed the course of American music," Martin said.

Born and raised in Cleveland County, Scruggs (1924-2012) revolutionized the banjo with his unique three-finger picking style (now known as "Scruggs Style"). »»»

Earl Scruggs Music Festival.
CORA WAGONER PHOTOS



Rob McCoury

“His career shows that tradition and innovation can go hand-in-hand,” Martin said. “He developed a style of playing that helped define bluegrass music, but he never stopped exploring and collaborating with new artists and new ideas.”

Those artists included some of bluegrass’s finest — Bill Monroe & the Blue Grass Boys, Lester Flatt, Ricky Scaggs, and Scruggs’ own sons—Randy, Gary, and Steve.

The idea to create the Scruggs festival emerged in 2018, and the concept quickly gained momentum. Community radio station WNCW initially approached Martin and J.T.

Scruggs (Earl’s nephew). The result has been a bountiful partnership between the Earl Scruggs Center, Isothermal Community College and WNCW.

In 2021, Claire Armbruster took on planning the festival through her company, Planning Stages. Her team joined forces with the original partners and began expanding the event, making it relevant at the local, regional, and national levels.

“One of my greatest achievements has been establishing a strong education and community-focused component as a



Sierra Hull

The Blue Ridge National Heritage has been present at the Scruggs fest each year to support WNC music and artists.

- **2022–2023:** Come Hear NC and BRNHA teamed up to share information about the region and the state's music scenes.
- **2024:** Rare Bird Farm presented the Blue Ridge Music Trails' Fine Tuned artists on the Foggy Mountain Stage.
- **2025:** The Bluegrass Situation and Jazz Foundation of America hosted "Healing the Hollers," a 12-artist fundraiser for BRNHA and post-Helene recovery.
- **2026:** The Blue Ridge Music Trails presents musician and ballad singer Murphy Campbell. Join us on Saturday, September 4th, at the new Louis Scruggs Stage!

core part of the festival. From the outset, we aimed to serve not only our audience, but also artists, regional organizations, and young musicians," stated Armbruster.

Within just half a decade, the Scruggs festival has showcased some of the biggest names in bluegrass, Americana, country, and roots music – Alison Krauss & Union Station, Bela Fleck, Marty Stuart & His Fabulous Superlatives, Green-sky Bluegrass, Del McCoury Band, Molly Tuttle, and many more. The mix of regional, national, and international artists has grown each year, in turn drawing a large and diverse audience.

"Just before Alison Krauss and Union Station took the stage, I looked out across the crowd from the side of the Flint Hill Stage and almost cried. There was a sea of people with hardly room for another," Martin said. "It was exactly what we had dreamed of – people coming together to celebrate Earl and the music he helped create. I still get emotional thinking about it."

The festival isn't slowing down anytime soon. Armbruster notes they will continue to build on the educational and community aspects, including partnerships with regional organizations such as the Junior Appalachian Musicians and the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area.

"We'll also continue evolving how we tell the story of Earl Scruggs and the people who shaped this music," said Armbruster. "This year is a great example—we're introducing the Louis Scruggs Stage, which honors Louise Scruggs and her groundbreaking role as the first female manager in country music."

Even though it's been over 80 years since Earl Scruggs made his Opry debut at the Ryman Auditorium in Nashville, Tennessee – a moment that truly marked the birth of bluegrass music – his legend, lore, and legacy remain as vibrant and inspirational now as ever.

"What continues to inspire me is how [Earl's] influence keeps reaching new generations of musicians and fans," Martin said. "Whether someone is discovering him for the first time or hearing his style echoed in contemporary artists, his music still feels alive and relevant – that's a powerful legacy." 🔑

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ALLEGHANY JUBILEE

WHERE THE MUSIC NEVER QUIT

When I first moved to Sparta in the late 1990s, I remember walking downtown one night, surprised to hear music, volume increasing. Following the vibrant sounds, I found myself inside the Alleghany Jubilee—watching couples glide across the floor as fiddlers warmed up, and realizing I'd stumbled into something special.

Across three decades, the Jubilee has been the heartbeat of Alleghany County — a place where music fills the room

and strangers quickly become friends.

The story begins in 1990, when Ernest and Agnes Joines purchased the old Spartan Theater on Main Street. Ernest, an Alleghany County native, was deeply rooted in old-time, bluegrass, and gospel music, playing in bands over the years with Agnes joining him as a duet partner. They began hosting weekly music and dance events and, by 1994, had transformed the space into a lively and memorable hall.

For 31 years, it was a cornerstone of

downtown life. Even after Ernest's passing in 2016, Agnes carried the tradition forward with help from family and friends. When the original building was sold in late 2024, it could have gone quiet for good. But the music had other plans.

Elizabeth and Ron Murray, newly retired to Sparta, had already fallen in love with the Jubilee. Determined to keep it going, they brought the dance-hall's spirit to North Sparta Parkway and reopened the doors in July 2025.

Today, the Jubilee's reputation »



When the original building was sold in late 2024, it could have gone quiet for good. But the music had other plans.

reaches beyond the mountains. Visitors from across the country and beyond still come looking for it. Flatfooting, two-step, line and square dancing—you'll find it all here, with folks of every age out on the floor. If you don't know how to dance, Tuesday nights start early to help you learn. And no matter when you show up, somebody's likely to grab your hand and get those feet moving.

Follow the music, and you'll find it—alive and well in Sparta. —

— Larry VanHoose



Henry Whitter
PHOTOS COURTESY
OF TED OLSON



LIGHTING THE FUSE

1925 'ASHEVILLE SESSIONS'

A century ago, a record producer from New York City headed into Western North Carolina in search of the sound of Southern Appalachia. Landing in downtown Asheville, Ralph Peer set up a recording space in the former George Vanderbilt Hotel and set into motion a series of field recordings that would forever change the course of American music.

"Peer was the producer responsible for releasing the earliest commercial recordings of the genre that came to be known as country music," said Ted Olson, professor of Appalachian Studies at East Tennessee State University in Johnson City. "Once Peer identified a market for recordings of 'hillbilly music,' he sought out new artists who performed that type of music to record for sale to customers."

Known as the "Asheville Sessions," the 1925 recordings by Peer have been mostly unknown to music lovers and historians alike, let alone the general public of Southern Appalachia and beyond. But, with Olson and the help of Rivermont Records, the sessions have finally received their due — something 100 years in the making with the recent release of the new album "Music from the Land of the Sky: The 1925 Asheville Sessions."

"I hope that listeners will comprehend Appalachia's profound importance in the evolution of country music," Olson said. "And that ➡➡➡"



Bascom Lamar Lunsford

"Peer was the producer responsible for releasing the earliest commercial recordings of the genre that came to be known as country music."

TED OLSON, PROFESSOR OF APPALACHIAN STUDIES AT EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY



listeners will identify Asheville's vital role as a catalyst for fostering positive cultural change within this misunderstood region."

Peer was a producer for Okeh Records, a New York label which, beyond releasing popular melodies and dance tunes at the time, was also leaning into niche areas of music, often neglected segments of the record-buying public. This included European recordings for the immigrant communities in the United States, as well as early jazz selections for Black audiences.

In 1924, Peer crossed paths with Bascom Lamar Lunsford during an Okeh recording session in Atlanta. Now regarded as a cultural icon of Western North Carolina, Lunsford was a talented musician and promoter in the Asheville area, something that parlayed itself into attracting Peers to come to the Blue Ridge Mountains and see what he could record and capture.

"[Lunsford] was responsible for drawing Peer to 'the land of the sky' [that is Western North Carolina] as a likely place to record musicians from Appalachia, a region deemed a hotbed of 'hillbilly' music," Olson said.

Coming to Asheville in August 1925, Peer put the word out in local newspapers, looking for local musicians to come to the George Vanderbilt Hotel and share their songs, with the finished product being a wax recording. After 10 days, 60 wax recordings were created during the sessions at the hotel.

The original recordings were primitive compared to those done with modern technology. Back then, a musician would have a large recording horn placed in front of them. From there, engineers would cut grooves into warm wax — the final sound was a mix of melody and background noise, with imperfections being the true beauty of the recordings when one listens to the selections a century later.

During the sessions, a slew of local musicians emerged, including Lunsford, J.D. Harris, Ernest Helton, R. B. Smith,



S. J. Allgood and more. Vaudeville performer Emmett Miller and the house jazz band for the George Vanderbilt Hotel were also captured during the sessions. In truth, the essence of the recordings is the variety of genres — gospel, blues, folk, jazz, etc. — which exposed the depth of the talent living in these mountains.

When Peer finished the session, he left Asheville and brought what he captured back to the record label, with many of the melodies eventually being manufactured into



THE CONVERSATION CONTINUES

Listen to our three Asheville Sessions episodes on the Down the Road podcast with host Laura Boosinger and guest Ted Olson. Get a sampling of the songs, and learn more about this historical event. Check out Season 7, Episodes 1-3 at BlueRidgeMusicNC.com.

records sold across the country and beyond. And yet, the sessions would be overshadowed by the seismic musical discovery Peer made when he headed to Bristol, Tennessee/Virginia in 1927.

Known as the "Big Bang of Country Music," the Bristol Sessions were a much larger operation than what occurred in Asheville just two years earlier. With an open invite to local musicians in that area, Peer was able to capture the first recordings of the Carter Family and Jimmie Rodgers (the "Father of Country Music" who lived in Asheville for a period prior to the Bristol Sessions). Those melodies soon sparked a musical revolution in America.

"My initial impression [of the Asheville Sessions] project animated a story as compelling and as worthy of public dissemination as that associated with the 1927 Bristol Sessions," Olson said.



Ernest Helton and
Osey Helton.

Skip ahead to now, Rivermont Records and the North Carolina Arts Foundation tracked down the recordings from the 1925 Asheville Sessions. With the initial discussion about the album project starting in 2017, those involved have spent the better part of the last decade gathering and remastering these recordings in time for the 100th anniversary.

Once the recordings were secured, the label and foundation tapped Grammy-nominated producer/sound engineer Bryan Wright to breathe new life into the songs. There were 28 tracks used for the final album, "Music from the Land of the Sky: The 1925 Asheville Sessions."

"People should realize that the Asheville Sessions yielded the earliest commercial recordings from Appalachia, [and] those sessions truly were groundbreaking," Olson said. "The release of [this album] might well deepen, and even correct, general awareness of [this] region's music history." —

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HARMONY & HERITAGE

CHEROKEE LANGUAGE REPERTORY CHOIR

The Cherokee Language Repertory Choir [CLRC] serves a dual purpose: honoring history and, most importantly, revitalizing the Cherokee language. Through education and exploration, Sara Snyder Hopkins uses the choir to foster a deep sense of cultural connection and preservation.

"[The CLRC] is centered around a larger language revitalization effort in the region and driven by the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians," Snyder Hopkins said. "And to maintain and encourage hymn singing that was practiced by the Cherokee people, but also more broadly by people in this region, in general – it's really about keeping a regional cultural tradition alive."

Snyder Hopkins is an assistant pro-

fessor of Anthropology and Sociology at Western Carolina University in Cullowhee (Jackson County). She also sings and composes music, and is the director of the university's Cherokee Language Program at WCU. Before WCU, Snyder Hopkins worked at the New Kituwah Academy, a Cherokee language immersion school located on the Qualla Boundary.

"I think it might surprise people to know that Cherokee people participated in shaped note singing," Snyder Hopkins said.

Snyder Hopkins points to a one-page journal entry made by Will West Long in April 1892. The entry notes a gathering of Cherokee people immersed in Christian harmony singing. Long's

words provide verification that, indeed, Cherokee people participated in the seven-shaped note tradition. This singing style continued well into the 20th century, with early recordings still available to correctly interpret the tradition.

Looking to combine her passion for the Cherokee language and creating music, Snyder Hopkins launched the CLRC in 2023. The ensemble's intent is to present the Christian harmony-shaped note tradition, but sung in the Cherokee language. As it currently stands, the group consists of roughly 15 members and performs throughout the area year-round.

"One of the things I want to reiterate is that the choir is not intended to represent Cherokee people," Snyder ➤➤➤

Cherokee Language Repertory Choir. SARA SNYDER HOPKINS PHOTO





"So, what we're really doing is participating in language revitalization, and even outreach work, on behalf of the university, who sponsors the choir. When we go out there, we're an educational ambassadorial group around Cherokee language."

— SARA SNYDER HOPKINS

Hopkins said. "So, what we're really doing is participating in language revitalization and even outreach work, on behalf of the university, which sponsors the choir. When we go out there, we're an educational ambassadorial group around Cherokee language."

The choir itself performs traditional and contemporary music, including new melodies that Snyder Hopkins wrote herself.

"We're drawing from a long-standing tradition," Snyder Hopkins said. "And it's [also] sort of a lab project in a way, where we're not doing things exactly like Cherokee speakers would've been doing in 1950."

When learning and rehearsing mate-

rial with the group, Snyder Hopkins ensures the members are singing in the correct tone, based on old recordings of Cherokee people from the 1950s and 1960s. She also makes sure to ask Cherokee elders about clarification on certain things, where "they say, 'I think you shouldn't do this' or 'You should do something different.'"

"I really encourage them to kind of take on the tone quality that these Cherokee speakers would've sung," Snyder Hopkins said. "And that's part of the repertoire component, [where] we're wanting to keep that thread of continuity."

During a performance, the CLRP also invites audience members to partic-

ipate. "What I actually prefer to do is more engaged activities," Snyder Hopkins said. "We show up with copies of our music and [try] to turn it into more of an educational event."

And as the CLRC grows, so does the deep sense of purpose among Snyder Hopkins and her choir members to keep these traditions thriving and to bring them to the forefront of the history and culture of the Qualla Boundary and greater Western North Carolina.

"Not everyone is doing [this], but enough people are, and we continue to keep these things alive," Hopkins said. "We're raising awareness of the language, and that connects all of us in the region in a broader way, too." 🔑

WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA DISTINCTIONS IN TRADITIONAL MUSIC

NO OTHER PLACE HAS had more influence on the development of the banjo in America. Musicians from the western Piedmont and mountain region, including Earl Scruggs, Charlie Poole, and Snuffy Jenkins, among many, are recognized as the creators and popularizers of modern banjo styles.

THE FIDDLE AND BANJO ENSEMBLE tradition that developed in Surry County's Round Peak community is embraced and emulated by young musicians around the world. The Mount Airy Fiddlers' Convention is now an annual gathering place for thousands of young musicians influenced by Round Peak musicians.

TRADITIONAL DANCE EVOLVED over generations with music traditions and flat-footing. Clogging in Western North Carolina is recognized as one of the most highly-developed vernacular dance traditions in the country. Haywood County is where team square dancing first originated in the 1930s.

ONE OF THE LONGEST, unbroken ballad singing traditions in America is found in Madison County where singers were first documented by English folk song collector Cecil Sharp prior to World War I. The current generation of singers continues to perform a wide range of ballads, including some brought from the British Isles by early settlers.

THE MOUNTAIN DANCE AND FOLK FESTIVAL, started in Asheville by Bascom Lamar Lunsford in 1928, is the oldest continuous folk festival in the United States and is the model for the National Folk Festival.

MERLEFEST, presented at Wilkes Community College in Wilkesboro on the last weekend in April, is one of the nation's largest and most influential "Americana" music events. It was founded in 1988 by Doc Watson in memory of his son Merle.



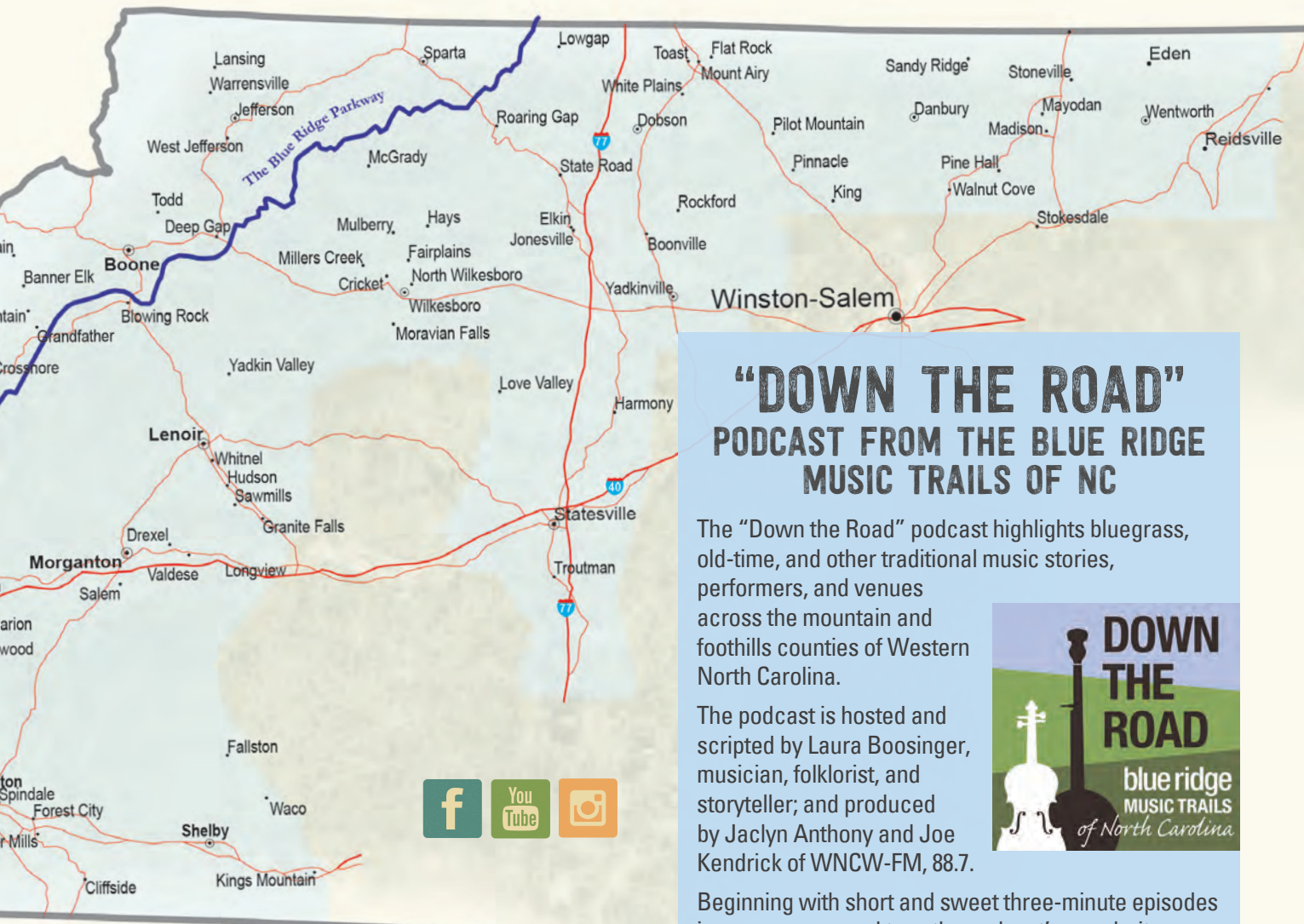
KEEP IN MIND



As you begin your journey, keep in mind that even though all the events listed occur on a regular basis, it is always best to verify the information before heading out. For the most up-to-date information on venues and events, please visit BlueRidgeMusicNC.com. Happy Trails!



WPAQ AM 740 IN MOUNT AIRY is the oldest live radio show that continues to program regional music from the Blue Ridge. The Merry Go Round program, which is broadcast live from the Downtown Cinema Theatre every Saturday, first signed on in 1948 and presents local old-time, bluegrass and gospel performers.



“DOWN THE ROAD” PODCAST FROM THE BLUE RIDGE MUSIC TRAILS OF NC

The “Down the Road” podcast highlights bluegrass, old-time, and other traditional music stories, performers, and venues across the mountain and foothills counties of Western North Carolina.

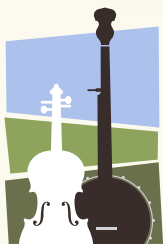
The podcast is hosted and scripted by Laura Boosinger, musician, folklorist, and storyteller; and produced by Jaclyn Anthony and Joe Kendrick of WNCW-FM, 88.7.



Beginning with short and sweet three-minute episodes in seasons one and two, the podcast’s popularity warranted more content. Episodes have expanded to around nine minutes and often feature multiple musical tracks showcasing the sounds of traditional music.

Episodes highlight historical and contemporary musicians and events. Through stories and interviews, the podcast helps weave together the sounds, venues, and voices behind traditional music across Western North Carolina.

You can find new episodes and the podcast archives at blueridgemusicnc.com, wncw.org, and podomatic.com.



blue ridge
MUSIC TRAILS
of North Carolina



BLUERIDGE
NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA



Steep Canyon Rangers with
Woody Platt. DAVID SIMCHOCK PHOTO

UNIVERSAL LANGUAGE

MOUNTAIN SONG FESTIVAL



Since its inception in 2006, the Mountain Song Festival (MSF) held at the Brevard Music Center has become a beloved annual gathering for world-class musicians and music lovers alike in the depths of Transylvania County.

"After 20 years, we feel proud of the special musical experience we've been able to create and cultivate for the community," said Woody Platt. "Our goal is to be deeply focused on both the fan experience and the artists' enjoyment. In many ways, we think of Mountain Song as a boutique festival – intimate, thoughtfully curated and centered around great music."

Creator of MSF, Platt is a nationally renowned sing-

er-songwriter and native of Brevard. He was also a founding member of the Steep Canyon Rangers, a Grammy-winning Americana/bluegrass act hailing from Western North Carolina. Platt fronted until his departure from the group in 2022.

"I love Brevard and Western North Carolina so much. It's an incredible feeling to be able to create an event that adds to the culture that makes this community and region so special," Platt said. "I grew up in Brevard and even graduated high school on the same Brevard Music Center stage that we now use for the Mountain Song Festival – I never take that for granted." »→

"The original idea was simple – use music as a platform to bring the community together while raising money for the club," Platt said. "That has been the guiding concept since day one."

– WOODY PLATT



For Platt, the initial seed of inspiration for MSF came from his late mother, Cindy, who encouraged her son to gather all his music friends and put on a community event to raise funds and awareness for the local Boys & Girls Club. Platt teamed up with John Felty, a local music promoter (owner of Mountain Song Productions), to create the festival. To date, MSF has garnered over \$2 million for the organization.

"The original idea was simple — use music as a platform to bring the community together while raising money for the club," Platt said. "That has been the guiding concept since day one."

Since its formation, the two-day festival has featured some of the biggest names in Americana, bluegrass, country, blues and roots music — Taj Mahal, Bela Fleck, Molly Tuttle, Robert Earl Keen, David Grisman, Mavis Staples, Peter Rowan, Del McCoury, Sam Bush, Charley Crockett, Zach Top, and many more.

"At the end of the day, we're simply open to great music," Platt said. "I think our audience has come to trust the programming and is willing to show up, whether they know the artists or not. That's one of the beautiful things about 20 years — it really does feel like a big family at this point."

The Steep Canyon Rangers always serve as the festival's host band. Platt's wife, singer-songwriter Shannon Whitworth, is also a regular performer at MSF, her songbird voice carrying across the BMC and into the ancient forest that cradles the picturesque pavilion stage.

"Each year, I look forward to reconnecting with artists I've met out on the road, and I take a lot of pride in welcoming them to perform in our hometown," Platt said. "The Brevard Music Center is an incredible, world-class venue. And with Steep Canyon Rangers as our hometown heroes and host band, it truly makes Mountain Song feel like something special."

Reflecting on the festival, Platt can't help but smile in awe not only at how much the event has grown since its first year, but also in gratitude for everyone involved.

"Twenty years feels like a big milestone, but it also feels like we're just getting started," Platt said. "Hopefully, we have another 20 right around the corner, and maybe one day we'll see our kids running the festival. We're truly lucky to call this community our home." —

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LONESOME WIND

UPSTREAM REBELLION

At the 2025 MerleFest in Wilkesboro, NC (the nation's premier Americana/bluegrass festival), an emerging act made its debut. Upstream Rebellion took the stage as part of the band competition, and members were inspired to continue on their destined musical path.

"The feeling of playing there was fulfilling," said guitarist Adam Winebarger. "The band competition was really just an excuse for us to come to the place where those who have inspired us spent plenty of time playing music."

And although the group didn't win the competition, what does remain is this fresh, hungry act eager to make its mark on the storied acoustic scene

here in Western North Carolina and greater Southern Appalachia.

"There are countless distractions to get caught up in nowadays, but perhaps the healthiest one to lose yourself in is music," said guitarist Andrew Bivens.

The band views its job onstage as a way for the audience to escape the hustle and bustle of daily life, only to immerse themselves in the soothing sounds of live music.

"We as a band want to serve as a beneficial distraction to all our listeners," Bivens said. "I hope that every time one of our songs come on, it brightens someone's day."

Upstream Rebellion is comprised entirely of musicians from WNC.

Alongside Winebarger (Trap Hill) and Bivens (Rutherfordton), the ensemble includes banjoist Max Rogers (Waynesville), dobroist Cooper Franklin (Canton), mandolinist Walker Ballance (Waynesville) and bass fiddler Jared Wills (Murphy).

"I think our biggest goal as a band is to show people that bluegrass can be more than what it seems on the surface," Bivens said.

Rogers, Ballance, and Franklin knew one another from growing up in Haywood County. Through impromptu jam sessions in the dorms of Western Carolina University (Jackson County), their paths crossed with each other and other band members. »

"After many noise complaints and common room jams later, we stumbled into more pickers on campus," Ballance said. "We knew something special was being formed when Adam, Andrew and Jared started joining the jams."

To note, Rogers was initially not a fan of bluegrass as a kid. But, that

"I've learned a lot from players like Jim Mills, Ron Block, Ron Stewart and J.D. Crowe," Rogers said. "They showed me how deep the banjo can go. Not just technically, but emotionally, too. They've set the standard for me, and their playing still shapes the way I approach every note."

The name of the group comes partly

it's all real and people enjoy that down-to-earth sound."

As of late, the band has been growing leaps and bounds, from casual jamming to consistent performances around the area. They've also added a contemporary element by doing bluegrass renditions of modern songs, including Adele's "Set Fire to the Rain" and "Use Somebody" by Kings of Leon.

"Upstream Rebellion ultimately plans to continue to grow as a band," Winebarger said. "Most importantly, we each plan to grow as musicians, considering the passion and backgrounds that each one of us comes from."

Last year, Upstream Rebellion raised more than a few eyebrows when the sextet opened for Woody Platt & The Bluegrass Gentlemen during "An Evening Under the Arch" in downtown Waynesville (Haywood County). Platt is the Grammy-winning former frontman of the Steep Canyon Rangers, and his solo outfit now features Buddy Melton, formerly of the acclaimed bluegrass band Balsam Range.

"Making more bluegrass lovers is something that drives us, and I think we're accomplishing that," Bivens said. "[And] while also, hopefully, paying our respects to the people who started the genre and defined its core." —

"We as a band want to serve as a beneficial distraction to all our listeners. I hope that every time one of our songs come on, it brightens someone's day."

— ANDREW BIVENS

sentiment quickly shifted when his grandfather handed him a banjo at age 15. The elder told the teenager to try to learn the instrument.

"I was pretty stubborn, so I set out to prove I couldn't play it," Rogers said. "But, within a few days, something clicked. It felt natural, like the banjo had been waiting for me. That's when everything changed. I fell in love with the instrument first, then the music."

For Rogers, the banjo became a way to creatively express himself. Between the rhythm, melody and "this raw character in the tone," the music spoke to the aspiring musician.

from a can of chewing tobacco. Already kicking around the idea of having the word "rebellion" somewhere in the moniker, the final piece of the puzzle came when Ballance was reading the label on a can of Kodiak.

"The phrase [on the can] said, 'Discovery Lies Upstream,'" Ballance said.

So, just what is it about the "high, lonesome sound" that continues to captivate these young musicians in search of their musical identity?

"The thing that makes bluegrass so special is its authenticity," Bivens said. "From its lyrics, harmonies and roots to the physical challenge of playing it —





CONNECTING THE DOTS

BLUE RIDGE NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

Western North Carolina's treasured landscape and nationally recognized cultural heritage were the ingredients for the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area's designation in 2003.

The ancient mountains have more plant diversity than any other location in North America. The Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians is the original steward of the land, and its people continue to contribute to WCU's heritage. And the

variety of nature and cultures has resulted in an area most unique in music, craft, and agriculture, one that is fueled by nature, community, and perseverance.

Across the mountains and foothills of WNC, the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area (BRNHA) is the regional cultural hub. It's bringing folks and communities together, while preserving and perpetuating traditional crafts and musical forms. The organization has two cultural trails, the Blue Ridge Craft

Trails and the Blue Ridge Music Trails, connecting over 1,000 culture bearers and organizations.

Simply by the numbers, the BRNHA has helped support WNC and the Qualla Boundary for the last 22 years, awarded 188 grants throughout its 25-county footprint, connected 255 traditional music venues, and 350 craft artists, galleries, and cultural organizations, and has profiled over 400 traditional artists in the region. »»»

"It's having this one voice that represents so many different communities, so many different artists, so many different natural resources that we have here — it's the fabric that makes this area so special."

— JESSE POPE

BLUE RIDGE MUSIC TRAILS

"It's been a great connecting point for locals and visitors," said Angie Chandler, executive director of the BRNHA. "And it's also been an economic engine for artists, musicians, venues, and small towns."

BRNHA reaches visitors and locals through websites, a podcast, magazines, programs, and social media. The organization has awarded small matching grants for a variety of regional and local projects, resulting in an \$8 million impact. Additionally, it supports activities at the Blue Ridge Parkway Visitor Center in Asheville, which averages roughly 100,000 visitors annually.

"From a natural and cultural heritage perspective, our Heritage Area is just such an important asset that we have here in Western North Carolina," said BRNHA Board Chair Jesse Pope, who also serves as President and CEO of Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation. "It's having this one voice that represents so many different communities, so many different artists, so many different natural resources that we have here – it's the fabric that makes this area so special."

The passionate staff who make up the BRNHA are a small, skilled group who aim to grow and nurture the organization and the region it serves. They're often roaming the highways and backroads of WNC, connecting with partners, meeting new artists, or being present at countless events and gatherings across the North Carolina Blue Ridge Mountains.

"Many of these communities are underrepresented. Many are small, rural communities that often do not receive recognition or have public attention shown on them," Pope noted. "And BRNHA does a great job highlighting those places, so it's a win-win for our local communities, but also for the tourists that come here looking for those unique experiences."

"Each community is special, with a unique history and story that is tied to our mountain culture and our unique landscape," added Chandler. "Through our work, we want to help preserve those stories and the natural and cultural identity authentically, and then share them with our neighbors and the visiting public – they all support each other."

Going beyond preservation, the BRNHA has a fundamental component called living traditions. "Our traditions are not stagnant," Chandler said. "If you look at the natural landscape, and the agricultural, Cherokee, craft, and [WNC] music traditions, generations bring new and fresh ideas and new creativity to the roots of those traditions. They are always evolving—they are living."

Chandler surmised, "The BRNHA connects the region with a vision of preserving our shared heritage, creating economic opportunities to help it thrive, and ensuring our heritage remains relevant and strong for future generations."

If you love the NC mountains and foothills and the region's special Appalachian culture, please consider a donation to the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area.

To learn more about the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area and to discover events and itineraries for the region, visit BlueRidgeHeritage.com.





COMING TOGETHER

JACK OF THE WOOD

On any given night, an array of talented acoustic musicians jump onstage at the Jack of the Wood in downtown Asheville. Hailing from the next town over or across the country, the musicians visit ritually for the beloved melodic engagements: the Wednesday Old-Time Jam, Thursday Bluegrass Jam, and Sunday Celtic Jam.

"It's an intimate listening room where you're gathering with friends, and you're going to get a great musical experience, a warm atmosphere," said Annabel Eckert. "And I don't

think there are enough places like that."

Annabel is the daughter of Joe and Joan Eckert, the founders of Jack of the Wood (JOTW). With the family owning and operating the establishment since it opened its doors in 1997, the space truly remains a family business — a testament to the legend, lore, and legacy of the JOTW and its upcoming 30th anniversary.

"It's an incredible feeling — I'm so proud," Annabel said of the anniversary. "I grew up between those walls. »»»

"It was all of these musicians, dancers, and artists — everyone coming from all these countries. And they found their way to Jack on Patton."

— JOE ECKERT



It opened when I was seven, and I've worked there on and off my whole life. As an adult, to be involved and help my folks keep these traditions and this history going? It's really special to me."

Regarded as one of the true anchor businesses in the downtown corridor and a pillar of Asheville's cultural and social revitalization in the late 1990s, the JOTW had a simple premise – to offer a traditional pub vibe open to all. Originally from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Joe wanted to create a place akin to the British Isles-style pubs in his hometown.

"And there wasn't really anything that was that traditional looking [at the time in downtown]," Joe recalled. "So, that was really the idea behind it."

Mere weeks after the JOTW launched, a mountain heritage concert was being held just a few blocks away at the Diana Wortham Theatre (now known as the Wortham Center for the Performing Arts). The event was filled with traditional musicians, many of which were looking for a cold beverage following the rehearsals, only to soon wander into the JOTW.

"It was all of these musicians, dancers, and artists – everyone coming from all these countries," Joe reminisced. "And they found their way to Jack on Patton."

During those early interactions, the local musicians mentioned to Joe that it was hard for them to find places to gather and play together. Joe offered up the JOTW. Thus, the friendship and partnership kicked off the weekly jams, which have been going on for the better part of the last three decades.



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Joan and Joe Eckert.



“Some players have hardly missed a week in 30 years,” Joe marveled.

Beyond the weekly jam sessions, a wide-variety of world-class artists have gotten behind the microphone at the JOTW. From Grammy winners The Infamous Stringdusters and Steep Canyon Rangers to Kevn Kinney of Drivin N Cryin and Shovels & Rope, the list of “you had to be there” gigs is longer than Patton Avenue itself. And each winter when the Warren Haynes Christmas Jam overtakes the city, JOTW hosts the “Songwriters in the Round” sessions.

“What we’re most proud of is that our intentions have remained the same,” Joe said. “We want to nurture the smaller bands and also the fun times, to present the traditional and acoustic music of whoever wants to come and play our stage — all of this is the culture of who we are, who we’ve always been.”

When asked about JOTW’s role in laying some of the crucial groundwork for Asheville becoming one of the hottest and most in-depth music cities in America — a sentiment recently underlined in articles by Rolling Stone

— Annabel can’t help but be proud of what her family has created, with the word “pioneer” immediately coming to mind when taking a moment to reflect.

“[JOTW] navigated that [cultural] map for a lot of people [early on],” Annabel said. “You can’t build something this special without that kind of history behind it.”

“And I think about another 30 years,” Joe added. “I’m pretty humbled by [the anniversary]. It was my intention to build a pub, and I’m just honored to be part of this place.” —





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HAPPENINGS

FESTIVALS, CONCERT SERIES, JAM SESSIONS, MUSIC CAMPS, EXHIBITS AND MORE

YEAR ROUND

Alleghany Jubilee

SPARTA

alleghanyjubilee.com

Mondays 6-8 pm, Tuesdays 6:30-9 pm,
Saturdays 7-9:30 pm

Blue Ridge & Beyond Concert Series

MOUNT AIRY

surryarts.org

Concerts year round, visit website.

Bluegrass & Old-Time at Jack of the Wood

ASHEVILLE

jackofthewood.com

Wednesdays 7 pm Old-Time Jam, Thursdays 7 pm Bluegrass Jam, Friday-Saturday evening bands, Sunday 12-3 pm Bluegrass Brunch

Jams & Events at Cedar Mountain Canteen

BREVARD

cedarmountaincanteen.com

Mondays 6-8 pm Monday Music Series, Thursdays 6-8 pm Song Swap, Saturdays 2-4 pm Bluegrass Jam, Sundays 3-5 pm Old-Time Jam

Cherokee Homestead Exhibit

HAYESVILLE

cccr-nc.org

Daily, sunrise to sunset, visit website.

Concerts & Events at Blowing Rock Art & History Museum

BLOWING ROCK

blowingrockmuseum.org

Events year round, visit website.

Concerts Asheville Civic Center

WEST JEFFERSON

ashcecivic.com

Concerts year round, visit website.

Concerts at 185 King Street **BREVARD**

185kingst.com

Concerts year round, visit website.

Concerts at Asheville Music Hall **ASHEVILLE**

ashevillmusicichall.com

Concerts year round, visit website.

Concerts at Black Mountain Center for the Arts **BLACK MOUNTAIN**

blackmountainarts.org

Concerts year round, visit website.

Concerts at Burnsville Town Center **BURNSVILLE**

burnsvilletowncenter.com

Concerts year round, visit website.

Concerts at City of Morganton Municipal Auditorium **MORGANTON**

CoMMAOnline.org

Concerts year round, visit website.

Concerts at Highland Brewing Company **ASHEVILLE**

highlandbrewing.com

Concerts year round, visit website.

Concerts at J.E. Broyhill Civic Center **LENOIR**

broyhillcenter.com

Concerts year round, visit website.

Concerts & Dances at John C. Campbell Folk School **BRASSTOWN**

folkschool.org

Events year round, visit website.

Concerts at Muddy Creek Café & Music Hall **SPARTA**

muddycreekcafeandmusicichall.com

Concerts year round, visit website.

ALWAYS CHECK BEFORE
HEADING OUT. THINGS HAPPEN.

Concerts at Smoky Mountain Center for the Performing Arts **FRANKLIN**

greatmountainmusic.com

Concerts year round, visit website.

Concerts at The Appalachian Theatre of the High Country **BOONE**

apptheatre.org

Concerts year round, visit website.

Concerts at The Arts Place of Stokes **DANBURY**

artsplaceofstokes.org

Concerts year round, visit website.

Concerts at the Don Gibson Theatre **SHELBY**

dongibsontheater.com

Concerts year round, visit website.

Concerts at The Foundation Performing Arts Center **SPINDALE**

foundationshows.org

Concerts year round, visit website.

Concerts at The Grey Eagle **ASHEVILLE**

thegreyeagle.com

Concerts year round, visit website.

Concerts at the Reeves Theater **ELKIN**

ReevesTheater.com

Concerts year round, visit website.

Concerts at White Horse Black Mountain **BLACK MOUNTAIN**

whitehorseblackmountain.com

Concerts year round, visit website.

Crouse House Pickers (Jam Session) **SPARTA**

alleganycountychamber.com

Mondays 6 pm

Feed & Seed **FLETCHER**

feedandseednc.com

Friday & Saturday 7:30-9:30 pm

Jackson Arts Market **SYLVA**

discoverjacksonnc.com

Saturday & Sunday 1 pm-5 pm

Jam Sessions at the Barber Shop **DREXEL**

BlueRidgeMusicNC.com

Saturdays 11 am

Jimmy's Pick n Grin **ANDREWS**

BlueRidgeMusicNC.com

Saturdays 7:30 -10:30 pm

Jones House - Weekly Jam Session **BOONE**

joneshouse.org

Thursdays 7-10 pm

Madison County Arts Council Concerts Series **MARSHALL**

madisoncountyarts.com

Concerts year round, visit website.

Mount Airy Museum of Regional History **MOUNT AIRY**

northcarolinamuseum.org

Tuesday-Sunday 10 am-5 pm

Foothills Watershed Bluegrass Jam

OLD FORT
foothillslocalmeats.com
Saturdays 1-4 pm

Mountain Music Jam at Oklawaha Brewing Company

HENDERSONVILLE
oklawahabrewing.com
Wednesdays 6:30-8:30 pm

Mountain Music Monday's at the Tasty Weasel Taproom

BREVARD
oskarblues.com
Mondays 6-8 pm

Music & History at Wilkes Heritage Museum

WILKESBORO
wilkesheritagemuseum.com
Monday-Friday 10 am-4 pm

Depot Bluegrass Jam at Mal's

MARSHALL
malsbarmarshall.com
Mondays 6:30 pm

Beans and Tunes

MARSHALL
malsbarmarshall.com
Tuesdays 5-9 pm

Acoustic Jam at Twist Again Barn

MARSHALL
marshalldepot.com
Thursdays 7-10 pm

Music N'All at the Barn at Twist Again Dance Barn

MARSHALL
exploreedenncc.com
Saturdays 6:30 pm

Old-Time Jam at the Reeves

ELKIN
ReevesTheater.com
Fourth Thursdays, except major holi-
days, 5:30 pm

Old-Time Music Heritage Hall at the Earle Theatre

MOUNT AIRY
surryarts.org
Monday through Friday 12-2 pm, Satur-
days from 11 am-1:30 p.m (Merry-Go-
Round), Sundays from 2-3pm

Phipps General Store Jam

LANSING
BlueRidgeMusicNC.com
Fridays 7-11 pm

CommUnity Dance at the Todd Mercantile

TODD
toddmmercantile.com
2nd Friday of each month, 6-10:30 pm

Sims Country Bar-B-Que - Food, Music & Dancing

GRANITE FALLS
simscountrybbq.com
Friday and Saturday 5-9 pm

WPAQ Saturday Morning Merry- Go Round

MOUNT AIRY
wpaq740.com
Saturdays 11 am-1:30 pm

Yadkin Cultural Arts Center Concert Series

YADKINVILLE
yadkinarts.org
Concerts year round, visit website.

Zuma Coffee Bluegrass Jam Session

MARSHALL
zumascocoffee.com
3rd Saturday, 2-4 pm

SEASONAL

SEASONAL

Brasstown Community Civic Center Summer Concerts

BRASSTOWN
Brasstown Community Center -
Facebook
Select Saturdays 6 pm, May 16, June 6,
July 18, August 15

Music at the Union Mill Learning Center

UNION MILLS
unionmillslearningcenter.com
April - December, visit website.

'Backstreet Summer Concerts

WEST JEFFERSON
ashechamber.com
May-August, Fridays 5:30-7 pm

Courthouse Concert Series

JEFFERSON
ashehistory.org
April - November, visit website.

Concerts on the Creek at Bridge Park

SYLVA
mountainlovers.com
May-September, visit website.

Music on Main in Sparta

SPARTA
alleglhanyartscouncil.org
Visit website.

Songwriter Showcase

HAYESVILLE
thepeacocknc.org
Saturdays, visit website.

Mid-Day Mountain Music at the Blue Ridge Music Center

BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY MILEPOST 213
BlueRidgeMusicCenter.org
May-October, daily 12-3 pm

Friday Night Live HIGHLANDS

highlandschamber.org
May-September, Fridays 6-8:30 pm

Live Mountain Music at the Orchard at Altapass

SPRUCE PINE
altapassorchard.org
May-October, Thursday-Sunday 1-5 pm,
visit website.

Concerts at the Blue Ridge Music Center

BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY
MILEPOST 213
BlueRidgeMusicCenter.org
May-October, visit website.

Foothills Watershed Music Series

OLD FORT
foothillslocalmeats.com
May-October, 1st and 3rd Saturdays
5-7pm

Pickin' on the Square

FRANKLIN
townoffranklinnc.com
May-Oct, 1st and 2nd Saturdays,
6-8:30 pm

Shindig on the Green

ASHEVILLE
folkheritage.org
Saturdays 7 pm, July 11-August 29,
except August 2nd

Hendersonville Street Dances

HENDERSONVILLE
visithendersonvillenc.org
Select Saturdays, June-August, visit
website.

Music on Main in Hendersonville

HENDERSONVILLE
visithendersonvillenc.org
Select Fridays, June-August, visit
website.

Waynesville Street Dance

WAYNESVILLE
downtownwaynesville.com
Select Fridays, June-August, visit
website.

An Appalachian Evening Summer Concert Series

ROBBINSVILLE
stecoahvalleycenter.com
June 27-August 29, Saturdays, visit
website.

RADIO SHOWS

Enjoy the sounds of mountain
music from the comfort of your
home, cabin, or car by dialing in
(or streaming) a radio show. :

- **BLUEGRASS REVIEW**, 3-5 pm,
Sundays, WSQL 102.1 FM
- **GOING ACROSS THE
MOUNTAIN** (bluegrass), 11 am - 7
pm, Saturdays, WNCW 88.7 FM
- **GOSPEL TRUTH** (bluegrass
gospel), 7-9 AM, Sundays, WNCW
88.7 FM
- **LET'S GO LOCAL** (ballads, old-
time, mountain music), 12-1 PM,
Saturdays, WART 95.5 FM
- **MADISON COUNTY AUDIO
ARCHIVES**, 7-8 PM, Mondays,
WART 95.5 FM
- **MOUNTAIN MORNINGS**
(bluegrass), 6-7 AM, Sunday
through Friday, WNCW 88.7 FM
- **THE TALL GRASS** (bluegrass and
root music), 6-7 PM, Saturdays,
WNCW 88.7 FM
- **THIS OLD PORCH** (old-time
music), 3-6 PM Sundays, WNCW
88.7 FM
- **WPAQ 740 AM**, Bluegrass, old-
time, and gospel music all day.
- **WPVM 103.7**, Eclectic mix which
can include bluegrass, old-time,
and gospel music.



Summer Concerts at the Jones House

BOONE
joneshouse.org
June-August, Fridays 5:30 pm

Unto These Hills

CHEROKEE
cherokeehistorical.org
May 30-August 22, 2026. Closed on Sundays, Shows are Monday-Saturday, 8 pm

Todd Summer Concert Series

TODD
toddn.org
Select Saturdays, June-August, visit website.

Summer Tracks Concert Series

TRYON
summertracks.com
June-August, two concerts a month, visit website. All shows begin at 7 pm. and gates open at 6 pm

Music on the Courthouse Square in Robbinsville

ROBBINSVILLE
grahamcountytravel.com
Select Fridays, June-September, visit website.

Historic Cowee School Concert Series

FRANKLIN
coweeschool.org
April-November, Shows on select Sundays, visit website.

Summer Concerts in the Park

BANNER ELK
bannerelek.org
June 25 - August 13, Thursdays 6:30 pm

Joe Shannon's Mountain Home Music Concert Series

BOONE & BLOWING ROCK
mountainhomemusic.com
July-December, multiple concerts, visit website.

Indoor Concerts at the Jones House

BOONE
joneshouse.org
Multiple concerts September-May 7:30 pm, visit website.

Sacred Harp Singing

SWANNANOA
christianharmony.org
Multiple dates, visit website.

Bluegrass at the Rock

VALDESE
townofvaldese.com
October - May, visit website.

Stompin' At River Farm Escape w/ Green Valley Cloggers

CANTON
Green Valley Cloggers - Facebook
May-September, visit website.

LEAF Global Arts

BLACK MOUNTAIN
theleaf.org
Visit website.

The Original Pickin at Priddy's

DANBURY
priddysgeneralstore.com
October, Saturdays

Jam Sessions at the T.M. Rickman Store

FRANKLIN
May-Dec, Saturdays 12 noon-4 pm

MAY

MAY 14-17

The Way of the Dulcimer Spring Retreat

LITTLE SWITZERLAND
donpedi.com
Thursday-Sunday

MAY 22-23

Swain County Heritage Festival

BRYSON CITY
greatsmokies.com
Friday, 6-9 pm, Saturday, 10 am-5 pm

MAY 29-30

Cold Mountain Music Festival

CANTON
coldmountainmusic.org
Friday 1-10 pm, Saturday 12-11 pm

JUNE

JUNE 4-6

Cherokee Bluegrass Festival

CHEROKEE
evansmediasource.com
Thursday - Saturday

JUNE 5-6

Mount Airy Bluegrass and Old Time Fiddlers Convention

MOUNT AIRY
mountairyfiddlersconvention.com
Friday-Saturday 2-11 pm

JUNE 6

Rhythm and Rails Bluegrass Night

OLD FORT
www.oldfortfest.com
Saturday 5:30-10 pm

JUNE 7-13

Blue Ridge Old-Time Music Week

MARS HILL
mhu.edu/conferences
Sunday-Saturday, week-long session

JUNE 13

Bluff Mountain Festival

HOT SPRINGS
madisoncountyarts.com
Saturday 10 am-6 pm

JUNE 13

Lake Lure Music Festival

LAKE LURE
Lakeluremusicfestival.com
Saturday 5-8 pm

JUNE 28

Singing on the Mountain at Grandfather

LINVILLE
singingonthemountain.org
Sunday 11 am-4 pm

JUNE 28-JULY 4

Swannanoa Gathering Mando & Banjo Week

ASHEVILLE
swangathering.com
Sunday-Saturday, week-long session

JUNE 28-JULY 4

Swannanoa Gathering Fiddle Week

ASHEVILLE
swangathering.com
Sunday-Saturday, week-long session

JULY

JULY 3-4

Christmas in July Festival

WEST JEFFERSON
ChristmasinJulyFestival.com
Friday 5-9 pm, Saturday 9 am-5 pm

JULY 3-4

Graham County Heritage Festival

ROBBINSVILLE
grahamcountytravel.com
Friday 5-10 pm, Saturday 10 am-10 pm

JULY 5-11

Swannanoa Gathering Traditional Song Week

ASHEVILLE
swangathering.com
Sunday-Saturday, week-long session

JULY 11

Coon Dog Day

SALUDA

Coon Dog Day - Facebook

Saturday 8 am-9 pm

JULY 10-11

Annual NC Blackberry Festival

LENOIR

ncblackberryfestival.com

Friday 5-9 pm, Saturday 9 am-9pm

JULY 12-18

Swannanoa Gathering Old-Time Week

ASHEVILLE

swangathering.com

Sunday-Saturday week-long session

JULY 16-18

Alleghany County Fiddlers Convention

SPARTA

alleghanycountyfiddlers.com

Friday - Sunday

JULY 17

Doc and Rosa Lee Watson Music Fest

BOONE, NC

docwatsonmusicfest.org

Doors at 6:30, show at 7 pm

JULY 24-26

Ashe County Bluegrass and Old Time Fiddlers Convention

WEST JEFFERSON

ashefiddlersconvention.org

Friday-Sunday

JULY 18

Annual Swannanoa Shaped Note Singing

WARREN WILSON CAMPUS

christianharmony.org

Saturday 10 am-3 pm

JULY 26-AUGUST 1

Swannanoa Gathering Guitar Week

ASHEVILLE

swangathering.com

Sunday-Saturday, week-long session

JULY 30-AUGUST 1

Mountain Dance and Folk Festival

ASHEVILLE

folkheritage.org

Thursday-Saturday 7-10 pm

JULY 31-AUGUST 1

Fly Around Festival

LANSING

Flyaroundfestival.com

Friday-Saturday

.....●.....
AUGUST
.....●.....

AUGUST 8-9

Blue Ridge Heritage Weekend

WAYNESVILLE

shelton-house.org

Saturday-Sunday



AUGUST 12-15
Annual North Carolina State
Bluegrass Festival
MARION
evansmediasource.com
 Wednesday-Saturday

AUGUST 14
Annual Doc Watson Day
Celebration Friday
BOONE
joneshouse.org
 Friday 4 pm

SEPTEMBER

SEPTEMBER 4-6
Earl Scruggs Music Festival
TRYON
earlscruggsmusicfestival.com
 Friday & Saturday, All Day

SEPTEMBER 5-7
Happy Valley Fiddlers
Jamboree
LENOIR
happyvalleyfiddlers.org
 Friday 7-11 pm, Saturday 11 am-11 pm,
 Sunday 10 am-6 pm



SEPTEMBER 5, 2026
Fall Etowah Christian Harmony
Singing
ETOWAH
etowahshapenote.org
 Saturday 10 am-3 pm

LABOR DAY SUNDAY
New River Blues Festival
GRASSY CREEK
NewRiverBluesFestival.info
 Visit website.

SEPTEMBER 11-12
Mountain Song Festival
BREVARD
mountainsongfestival.com
 Friday 4-10 pm, Saturday 12 noon-10 pm

SEPTEMBER 11-20
Mountain Music Festival at the
Mountain State Fair
FLETCHER
wncagcenter.org
 Performances throughout the 10-day event

SEPTEMBER 12
Music in the Mountains Folk
Festival
BURNSVILLE
toeriverarts.org
 Saturday

SEPTEMBER TBD
Music at the Mill
WAYNESVILLE
francismill.org
 Saturday 10 am-4 pm, visit website.



SEPTEMBER 19

Blue Ridge Heritage Festival

SPARTA

alleganycountychamber.com

Saturday 10 am - 4:30 pm

SEPTEMBER 19-20

Heritage Weekend at the Folk Art Center

ASHEVILLE

southernhighlandguild.org/

Visit website.

SEPTEMBER 19

Yadkin Valley Harvest Festival

YADKINVILLE

visityadkin.com

Saturday, 10 am-3:30 pm

OCTOBER

OCTOBER 3

Spruce Pine BBQ Championship & Bluegrass Festival

SPRUCE PINE

sprucepinebbqbluegrass.org

Saturday

OCTOBER 3

Bascom Lamar Lunsford "Minstrel of Appalachia" Festival

MARS HILL

lunsfordfestival.com

Saturday 10 am- 4pm

OCTOBER 3-4

John C. Campbell Folk School Fall Festival

BRASSTOWN

folkschool.org

Saturday-Sunday 10 am-5 pm

OCTOBER 9-11

Cashiers Valley Leaf Festival

CASHIERS

villagegreencashiersnc.com

Friday-Saturday 10 am-5 pm, Sunday 10 am-3 pm

OCTOBER 9-11

Autumn Leaves Festival

MOUNT AIRY

autumnleavesfestival.com

Friday-Sunday

OCTOBER 11-16

The Way of the Dulcimer Fall Retreat

LITTLE SWITZERLAND

donpedi.com

All day Thursday-Sunday

OCTOBER 16-17

Stecoah's Harvest Festival

ROBBINSVILLE

stecoahvalleycenter.com

Friday 6-8 pm, Saturday 10 am-4 pm

Earl Scruggs
Center in Shelby.



OCTOBER 17

The Official Fall Liver Mush Festival of North Carolina: Mush, Music and Mutts

SHELBY

nclivermushfestival.com

Saturday 9 am-4 pm

OCTOBER 17

Apple Harvest Festival

WAYNESVILLE

downtownwaynesville.com

Saturday 10 am-5 pm

OCTOBER 17

Valle Country Fair

VALLE CRUCIS

vallecountryfair.org

Saturday

OCTOBER 24

Riddlefest

BURNSVILLE

traditionalvoicesgroup.com

Saturday 3 pm

OCTOBER 24

Smoky Mountains Bluegrass Festival

MAGGIE VALLEY

Haywoodarts.org

Saturday

NOVEMBER

NOVEMBER

Ellenboro Fiddlers and Bluegrass Convention

ELLENBORO

Ellenboro Fiddlers Convention

Facebook

NOVEMBER 2

Swannanoa Valley Shaped Note Singing

BLACK MOUNTAIN

christianharmony.org

Multiple dates, visit website.

2027

FEBRUARY 6-7

Appalachian State Old-Time Fiddler's Convention

BOONE

fiddle.appstate.edu

Saturday-Sunday

FEBRUARY 12-14

Bluegrass First Class

ASHEVILLE

bluegrassfirstclass.com

Friday-Sunday

FEBRUARY 27

Tommy Jarrell Festival

MOUNT AIRY

surryarts.org

Last Saturday of February

MARCH TBA

Caldwell Traditional Musicians Showcase

LENOIR

broyhillcenter.com

Visit website.

MARCH TBA

Annual Sandy Ridge School Bluegrass Show

SANDY RIDGE

Sandy Ridge School Bluegrass Show

- Facebook

Visit website.

APRIL TBA

Ola Belle Reed: A Songwriting Retreat

WEST JEFFERSON

ashcountyyarts.org

Friday-Sunday, visit website.

APRIL 29-MAY 2

MerleFest

WILKESBORO

merlefest.org

Thursday 2:30-11 pm, Friday & Saturday 9 am-11 pm, Sunday 9 am-7 pm

MAY TBA

Smoky Mountain Spring Fest at Stecoah

ROBBINSVILLE

stecoahvalleycenter.com

Saturday, 11 am-4 pm

MAY TBA

Steve Sutton Fest

HAYWOOD

stevesuttonfest.com

Friday-Saturday

SMOKY MOUNTAINS BLUEGRASS FESTIVAL

10.24.26

BALSAM RANGE
APPALACHIAN ROAD SHOW
UNSPOKEN TRADITION
RED CAMEL COLLECTIVE

SCAN TO PURCHASE TICKETS



— VISIT —
HAYWOOD
WESTERN NC MOUNTAINS



North
Carolina
Arts
Council

This project is supported by the
North Carolina Arts Council, a
division of the Department of
Natural and Cultural Resources.



HAYWOOD COUNTY ARTS COUNCIL

HAYWOODARTS.ORG ★ 828.452.0593



Cowee School

ARTS & HERITAGE CENTER

A vibrant hub for culture & art in the Southern Appalachians!



Built in 1943 on the site of a former Civilian Conservation Corps camp, the Cowee School educated area youth for nearly seven decades. The historic structure, the heart of Cowee-West Mills Historic District and the hub of the Nikwasí-Cherokee Cultural Corridor is now an arts and heritage center serving Western North Carolina residents and visitors.

Located within a half mile of thousands of years of history, from ancient Cowee Mound to the Rickman Store, the Cowee School Arts and Heritage Center promotes the teaching and preservation of the cultural and artistic heritage of the Southern Appalachians and Cherokee people.



Save the date:

Cowee Concert Series:

- ♦ April 12 - Kaira Ba ♦ May 3 - Flat Bridge
- ♦ June 28 - Paper Wings ♦ July 26 - Asheville Mtn. Boys
- ♦ September 20 - Richie & Rosie

Farmer's Market - Wednesdays May - Oct

Free Community Art Days - Feb 7th & Oct 24th

Open Mic Night - second Friday of every month

Speaker's Series - third Monday of every month

Cowee Christmas - first Saturday of December

Swing on by:

Enjoy a snack or beverage while you peruse the mercantile for a thoughtful and locally crafted gift for someone special (or yourself!) and sign up for:

- pottery
- weaving
- dancing
- painting
- felting
- yoga
- quilting
- and more!



Resident Artists:

Alarka Expeditions || Carol Conti Painting & Fine Art Studio || Carolina Artworks || Cowee Pottery School
 || Cowee Textiles || The Dance Arts Co-Op || Smoky Mountain Quilter's Guild
 Blue Ridge Bartram Trail Conservancy || everwho design || Story Made Project
 -- **Cowee Co-Workspace for local artists and groups to gather.** --

Something for everyone...



This project was supported by the N.C. Arts Council, a division of the Department of Natural & Cultural Resources. NCArts.org

51 Cowee School Drive
Franklin, NC 28734

828.369.4080

www.coweeschool.org





STECOAH VALLEY CULTURAL ARTS CENTER

CELEBRATING 100 YEARS OF EDUCATION AND PRESERVATION

AN APPALACHIAN EVENING SUMMER CONCERT SERIES



KRUGER BROTHERS

JUNE 27

June 27th
— THROUGH —
August 29th



RESONANT ROGUES

JULY 4



**BECKY BULLER &
NED LUBERECKI**

JULY 11



CAROLINE OWENS

JULY 18



HOUSE OF HAMILL

JULY 25



**BUNCOMBE
TURNPIKE**

AUGUST 1



**APPALACHIAN
SMOKE**

AUGUST 8



JEFF LITTLE TRIO

AUGUST 15



**SETH MULDER
& MIDNIGHT RUN**

AUGUST 22



SHELTON WILLIAMS

AUGUST 29

121 SCHOOLHOUSE RD. STECOAH, NC 28771

828.479.3364

STECOAHVALLEYCENTER.COM

