

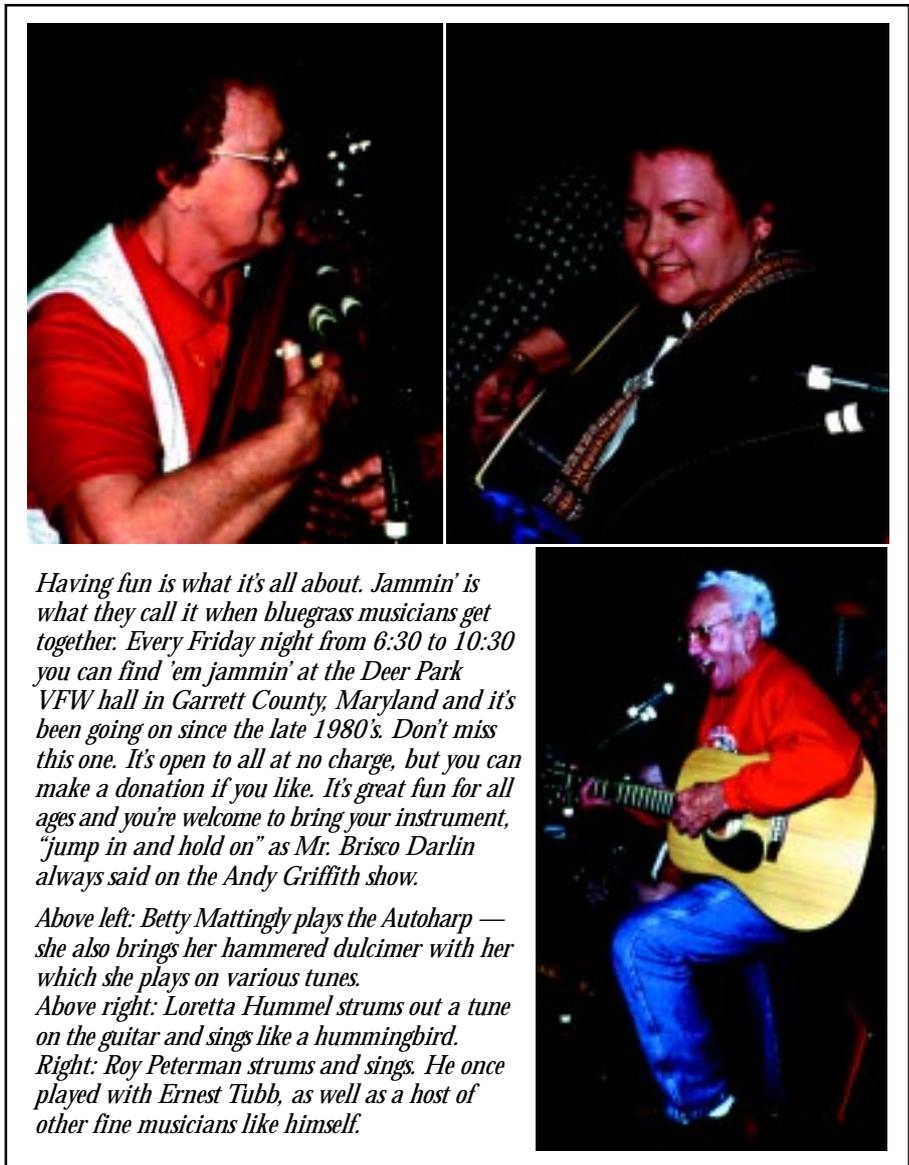
# Bluegrass Festivals Feature Great Family Fun and Entertainment

The Western Maryland region is very fortunate to be located in an area where there are many bluegrass festivals on tap in the coming months as we head into spring and summer. Most of these festivals (see list on page 19) are just a short drive and each one is a ticket to a fascinating day-trip filled with great music, cool activities, good food and family fun.

“The Mid-Atlantic region is a major hotbed for bluegrass festivals,” says Dan Hayes, executive director of the International Bluegrass Music Association (IBMA), a professional trade association dedicated to promoting and expanding the success of bluegrass music. “The states of Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia, all host multiple bluegrass festivals that have earned great reputations as well-run shows.”

Dan notes that there are more than 500 festivals hosted around the country every year and he says there are two things that are inherent in any festival you attend. “First, there’s the level of talent of the musicians that people will enjoy being presented, from the nationally known talent to the very talented regional and local artists. It is very impressive,” he said. “Second, the atmosphere at these festivals gives them a unique flavor. In addition to having more than one stage and more than any one act playing at a time, there are workshops, youth activities, craft shows or other types of community celebrations taking place in conjunction with the festival.”

Local musician John Arnold is a veteran of many bluegrass festivals held in the area. His group, Lonesome Highway, is based in Romney, West Virginia, and they specialize in playing contemporary and traditional bluegrass. According to John, the festivals are very family friendly and it is a good time out for people of all ages. “The festivals really are a family oriented event and a great value in family entertainment. You see lots of kids in the audience and many even performing on stage. All of them having a lot of fun with their parents, grandparents and other relatives,” he said. “Bluegrass festivals are also pretty wholesome. There is absolutely no alcohol or drugs allowed and the



*Having fun is what it's all about. Jammin' is what they call it when bluegrass musicians get together. Every Friday night from 6:30 to 10:30 you can find 'em jammin' at the Deer Park VFW hall in Garrett County, Maryland and it's been going on since the late 1980's. Don't miss this one. It's open to all at no charge, but you can make a donation if you like. It's great fun for all ages and you're welcome to bring your instrument, "jump in and hold on" as Mr. Brisco Darlin always said on the Andy Griffith show.*

*Above left: Betty Mattingly plays the Autoharp — she also brings her hammered dulcimer with her which she plays on various tunes.*

*Above right: Loretta Hummel strums out a tune on the guitar and sings like a hummingbird.*

*Right: Roy Peterman strums and sings. He once played with Ernest Tubb, as well as a host of other fine musicians like himself.*

crowds are always orderly and very well behaved.”

The popularity of bluegrass music has soared in the last few years with many mainstream country artists returning to their bluegrass roots like Ricky Skaggs, Vince Gill, Marty Stewart, Patty Loveless and even Dolly Parton. Each of these artists has recently produced a CD of bluegrass music and they feature it prominently in their live shows. Another factor has been the highly successful, multi-platinum soundtrack from the movie “Oh Brother, Where Art Thou.” The collection of bluegrass material won five Grammy Awards this year and brought national attention to the bluegrass art form.

According to Dan Hayes from IBMA, bluegrass music is very lucky to still have many of the pioneers of the music performing on a regular basis. “The people who helped create bluegrass music are still out there playing at festivals and they are still headliners in most cases,” said Dan, of bluegrass legends Ralph Stanley, Earle Scruggs, Doc Watson and J.D. Crow. “They are still very viable but you also have a new generation of talent that has come along like an Alison Kraus, Del McCoury, Lonesome River Band, IIRD Tyme Out or a Rhonda Vincent. Those kinds of people are opening doors to a whole new generation of fans.”

*continued on next page*

*Kathleen—continued from pg. 14*

Nine year-old Kathleen Myers looks like a typical American girl who enjoys school and playing with her friends. But there is a difference between Kathleen and the other fourth graders at Keyser Primary School. When you put a fiddle in one hand and a bow in the other, Kathleen is a child prodigy whose musical talent is just beginning to blossom. This will mark her third full year of competition at fiddle contests in the area and according to her father, Ed Myers, Kathleen is gearing up for a breakout year on the fiddle circuit. “It really opens peoples eyes when they see a girl that young playing so well,” said Ed, who repairs fiddles as a hobby and introduced his daughter to the fiddle several years ago. “People react very positively toward her at the contests and she really enjoys being in the spotlight,” he said. “Performing in front of an audience has been very good for Kathleen.

Last year, “While competing in a total of eleven contests, Kathleen won five first, and three seconds in area competitions,” said Ed.

John Arnold, a local bluegrass musician, has seen Kathleen’s fiddle playing up close, serving as a judge at last year’s Peach Festival fiddle contest in Springfield, West Virginia. “She’s nine years old and she’s pretty good. You can tell she’s grown up around music and I’d say she’s on her way to being an excellent player,” said John. “Her dad plays guitar, her mom plays the fiddle and her brother plays mandolin. The Myers family is definitely passing the music tradition down to the next generation.”

As for Kathleen, she says she’s looking forward to getting out there on stage again this summer. “I love playing the fiddle but I enjoy participating in the contests more than anything,” she said. “You have a lot of fun at the contests and learn a lot from the other fiddlers.” Her dad says Kathleen has come to realize that winning competitions is great but she gets a lot of enjoyment out of playing in front of an audience.

There are many fiddle contests (*see list on pg. 19*) in the area that are within a short drive. If you go to one you will surely see fiddle players of all ages take their turn on stage to compete against each other. But if you are lucky enough, you just might come across a young, talented fiddler named Kathleen Myers and it will be a musical experience you will never forget.



*At home in the mountains, local bluegrass band, Lonesome Highway recently took 5th in a national contest at Nashville, TN. Left to right are: Jody Southerly, Jimmy Kountz, Tim Southerly and John Arnold. One of the pluses of bluegrass music is the ability to play just about anywhere—the instruments are acoustic (not requiring electricity).*

As a working member of a bluegrass band, John Arnold says the festivals provide a great atmosphere and opportunity for people to share the music with each other. “Everyone has a good attitude about sharing the music and promoting the music as much as we can. I guess we’re all ambassadors of bluegrass music.”

Dan Hayes agrees with John, pointing to the fellowship, the camaraderie and the kind of community spirit between the fans at bluegrass festivals. “The whole fellowship surrounding the festivals is something that everyone enjoys and it’s what I think is rather unique,” says Dan. “It’s most evident at many of these festivals in what we call the parking lot jam sessions or parking lot picking. Rarely do you go to a concert and, after it’s over, all of the fans

head to the parking lot to get out their instruments and play with one another and make music,” he said. “Bluegrass music will be the centerpiece but what you find are people that are very welcoming and very inclusive. It is a family atmosphere and people want to make music with each other and actually get to know each other better.”

So pack up your family, bring your lawn chairs, your appetite for food and fun, and expect to hear some first-rate live music at a bluegrass festival near you. There are plenty to choose from and most are just a short drive away from where you are right now.



## Fiddle Contests in this Area

**Friendsville, Maryland** — 3rd Saturday in July at the park

**Cumberland, Maryland, Mid Atlantic Region Championships** — 4th Saturday in October at Washington Middle School

**Burlington, West Virginia, Burlington Apple Harvest Festival Fiddle Contest** — October 6, 2002 at 1:00 p.m. at the Apple Butter pavilion, Burlington Children's Home Campus. For information call: Vicki Ginn 304-788-2342 Ext. 235

**Oakland, Maryland, Maryland State Fiddle & Banjo Championship** — October 11th & 12th 2002 at Southern High School. For information call: Heather Hanline at The Dove Center 301-334-6255

## Nearby Bluegrass Festivals

### MARYLAND

April 25-27, Arcadia, Reisterstown (410) 374-2895

July 13-14, Westminster (410) 857-2771

July 19-21, Puzzly Run Folk Life Center, Grantsville (301) 746-7040

August 8-11, Leonardtown (301) 475-8191

September 19-21, Arcadia, Reisterstown (410) 374-2895

September 20-21, Berlin (410) 641-4151

September 21, Deale (410) 867-2400

### PENNSYLVANIA

May 16-19, Gettysburg (717) 642-8749

May 23-26, Reinholds, Denver (717) 445-9496

August 3, Lancaster (717) 299-8217

August 22-24, Gettysburg (717) 642-8749

September 1-2, Berlin (814) 267-3097

### VIRGINIA

May 5, Winchester (540) 662-3863

May 24-25, Culpeper (540) 399-1173

June 15, Mouth of Wilson (540) 579-7092

September 14, Norton, Wise (540) 328-6018

### WEST VIRGINIA

June 23-29, Snowshoe, Marlinton (304) 799-7121

June 27-30, Summersville (304) 872-3145

August 9-11, Elkins (304) 637-1209

*Note: Bluegrass festivals should not be confused with country music festivals — they are not the same. At most country music festivals alcohol beverages are allowed and sold. This is not so at a bluegrass festival.*



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