



FROM THE PRESIDENT

STATE CONTEST

As you know, the Montana State Contest is scheduled for Sept. 30 and Oct. 1 in Choteau. Besides changing the dates of the contest, we have made some other changes that we hope will increase the number of participants and spectators.

Changes in contest

We decided to forego certification by the National Oldtime Fiddlers Contest in Weiser this year. The primary reason for this is that Weiser requires a minimum of three judges for certification, and we felt that we could attract more fiddlers by having just two judges who have attained national stature. Not only does this save us the cost of certification, but it also reduces the overall judging budget, leading to a saving of close to \$900. We will use some of that saving to be able to attract top judges from farther away and also to increase the amount of prize money given out.

Weiser also requires that judges in certified contests be sequestered from the stage area. As those of you who have been to the contest in Choteau know, that has meant having our judges spend their time in the cramped kitchen of the Pavilion. This year we will have open judging, where the judges are at a table in front of the stage. Not only will that make the contest more comfortable for the judges, but it will also give the audience a chance to watch them in action. Open judging is certainly not a new concept in Montana; it has been used successfully at Kalispell and Lewistown, and I used it for the last three years of the Classic West contest in Bozeman 30 years ago.

Another change this year is that the entire contest will be open to all fiddlers. As you know, for the last few years the first two rounds were open so that everyone got to compete for prize money, but the last round was limited to MSOTFA members to compete for trophies and the “state title.” Non-members will now be eligible for trophies and titles. I know of at least two other states, Idaho and California, where the state contests are fully open. In both cases, more and more fiddlers from throughout the region are now competing.

The last change is that we will have two rounds in the “Dance Fiddle” division this year. In addition to a round at the Friday evening “Street Dance” (which will be held in the Pavilion to avoid weather issues), there will be a second round Saturday morning. Furthermore, I am hoping to get two good local dancers to judge the competition. Again, we hope that this change will attract more fiddlers, especially those who play good dance tunes but don’t consider themselves to be “contest” fiddlers.

Judges

We have two outstanding judges for the contest this year. Both have won national championships in their respective divisions and both have substantial judging experience, including judging at the National Oldtime Fiddlers Contest in Weiser. Starr McMullen, from Corvallis, OR, is the 2014 Senior champion at Weiser. Gary Schuh, from Gresham, OR, won the national Young Adult championship in 1993 and the National Adult championship in 2014. We are tickled to have them be part of our contest.

Accommodations

As in the past, camping is available in the Choteau City Park right next to the Pavilion. However, this year there will be an \$8/night fee. There will be drop boxes available to put the money in. The Stage Stop Inn is serving as

the host motel again, and they are offering a special rate of \$83 plus tax per night (breakfast included) for up to 4 occupants to contest participants. Call (406) 466-5900 and ask for the fiddle contest rate. They also have room available for jamming both Friday and Saturday nights.

CALVIN VOLLRATH CONCERT

As many of you know, the MSOTFA is sponsoring a concert by Calvin Vollrath, the unparalleled fiddler from Alberta, Saturday, October 15, 2016 in the Belgrade High School Auditorium (303 N. Hoffman in Belgrade) at 7 p.m. Calvin will be accompanied by Clinton Pelletier on guitar and Kimberley Holmes on keyboard. Both are outstanding musicians in their own right and their ability to fit in to Calvin's style(s) makes for an outstanding musical experience.

The concert will cost \$15, and seating is open. Doors will open at 6:30 p.m. You are assured of a first-rate concert featuring a wide range of musical styles. You can get a sample of their work on the following YouTube clip of a "mini concert" that Calvin and Clinton gave last year in Red Bluff, CA:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P9mC2Pr1K8A>

FIDDLE CAMP

Fiddle Camp was a great success yet again. There were over 100 students each week, which was a terrific turn out. The auction once again was very successful bringing in over \$8,000 due to the generosity of the participants and the community. If you have never been to camp, we encourage all levels and all ages to participate in what many call a life changing experience.

As camp has ended, the preparation for the 2017 has begun. So far we have solidified a few instructors leading up to strong lineup. Some of these include April Verch, Andrew Finn Magill, Chirps Smith, David Brinkman, Blaine Sprouse, and for guitar we have Greg Blake and Mike Dowling. You can look for updates of instructors on the website montanafiddlers.org.

Fred Buckley
Montana Fiddle Camp Director

FALL MEETING

The 2016 MSOTFA meeting is scheduled for 1:00 p.m. Saturday, October 29 in the public meeting room at the Gallatin County Detention Center, 605 South 16 Avenue in Bozeman. The Detention Center is just behind (to the east) of the Gallatin County Law and Justice Center. If you are coming in on South 19th Ave, turn east on Dickerson Street and you will run in to the Law and Justice Center. If you are coming in on College Street, turn north on South 16th Street and you will also run in to the Law and Justice Center.

In addition to election of officers for the next two years, we will discuss the plusses and minuses associated with moving the state contest to later in the year. I hope for a good turnout so that we will have lots of viewpoints to discuss.

UPCOMING FIDDLE CONTESTS

Sept 26-27 Grand Master Fiddler Championship, Nashville, TN. grandmasterfiddler.com

Sept 30-Oct 1 Montana State Fiddle Contest, Choteau, MT

Oct 17-18 Bob Wills Fiddle Festival & Contest, Greenville, TX. twinfiddleproductions.com

Jim McMillan
MSOTFA President

**Keeping the fiddle spirit alive,
yesterday, today, and tomorrow.**