



FROM THE PRESIDENT

PRESIDENT'S WELCOME

It has been an interesting year for the MSOTFA. In some respects we have flourished and in others we have seen some disappointments. Our Fiddle Camp continues to thrive. It is recognized around the country for great instructors, a very reasonable price, an outstanding location, and superb dining. The state contest was a success; the change in timing to September did not hurt participation, and it certainly helped in getting more support from the Choteau community.

On the other hand, there is a consensus among most of the districts that participation in their events is on the decline. The number of fiddlers, especially younger fiddlers, at the jams are down. In many cases, there are almost as many non-fiddling acts as there are fiddlers. A variety of music performed is welcomed, but it is of concern that the number of oldtime fiddlers is on the decline.

I would point out that the decline in participation in jams is an issue that just about all states in the region are dealing with. The overall interest in fiddling, based on the number of participants in contests and the enrollments in fiddle camps such as ours, does seem to be holding steady for the past 5 or so years. Our challenge is to find ways to involve more of our fiddlers in district-level events.

One answer may be to offer a wider range of venues. For example, I know that in some neighboring states most of the jams are "circle jams" in retirement facilities, nursing homes, and other similar venues. And I know of at least two cases here in Montana where teachers organize jams for their students and anyone other local fiddlers, again a "circle" format. These types of jams are very informal, they require little organization, and they focus on sharing the music with other fiddlers, and they are a great way to expose fiddlers to new tunes. However, they do not bring in much-needed revenues from the venues the way that bar jams do.

I would encourage districts, especially those who are experiencing low participation in their jams, to think about including a wider range formats in your events to (i) get more younger fiddlers involved and (ii) provide entertainment to a wider range of audiences. I ask you to let me know what works for you so that I can share your successes with everyone.

ANNUAL MEETING

The annual meeting of the MSOTFA was held Oct. 29, 2016 in the Gallatin Valley Detention Center's meeting room. There were no major issues to be discussed or decided. There was a general agreement that moving the state contest to late summer and not certifying the contest for the national contest at Weiser were good moves. We also discussed ways to enhance communications within the organization, and two changes were agreed upon. First, Cole Flikkema will work with Reid Buckley to make it easier to keep the association's web page more up to date.

Second, communications from the state level will be routed through the districts' officers. It is obvious that the districts have more up-to-date records of addresses, both for mail and emails and the change will hopefully get

communications out to the membership more efficiently. Districts will be reimbursed by the state for the costs of printing and mailing hard copies of communications.

The current officers (Jim McMillan, president, and Cole Flikkema, vice president) were reelected for another 2-year term. The offices of secretary and treasurer are appointed positions; Katelyn Swanson and Infinity Thomson have graciously accepted reappointments to the respective positions.

2016 STATE CONTEST

We had another successful contest in Choteau this year. Moving the contest to the end of September seems to have been a positive change. Support from the community was significantly higher than in past years, and we thank Orville and Vera Graddock for all of their efforts to solicit contributions from businesses.

The biggest change in the format of the contest was moving the Friday night “street dance” in to the pavilion, and the outcome was very positive. The audience seemed to enjoy the more structured atmosphere, the improved sound setup, the smoother dancing surface, and the lack of interference from motorcycles and 18-wheelers driving by.

Upgrading the dance fiddle competition to two rounds, having good dancers as judges, and increasing the prize money was well received. The only instruction that the judges were given was to reward the musicians who were the most fun to dance to.

While the number of contestants was almost the same as last year, the overall quality of music was certainly improved. This is not just a personal opinion; both judges commented more than once that they were very impressed with the level of music at all levels.

Here is the list of winners in the “certified” divisions at the contest this year:

DIVISION		1	2	3	TOTAL	DIVISION		1	2	3	TOTAL
CHAMPIONSHIP						JUNIOR					
1	Nancy Padilla	564	565	567	1696	1	Benniion	571	568	564	1703
2	Angelina Johnson	559	567	555	1681	2	Zach Curtis	550	545	551	1646
3	Brady Shimmin	544	558	548	1650	3	Gabriel Shimmin	534	551	552	1637
4	Sylvie Johnson	544	553	548	1645	4	Cadhia Norris	540	539	545	1624
5	Kelly Buckley	555	540	548	1643	5	Lindsey Curtis	516	524	527	1567
ADULT						JUNIOR JUNIOR					
1	Katelyn Swanson	562	563	552	1677	1	Tarquin Bennion	568	564	553	1685
2	Infinity Thomson	555	557	548	1660	2	Katie Johnson	556	556	532	1644
3	Ryan Keith	547	552	546	1645	3	Ellyce Shimmin	552	558	529	1639
4	Lori Schreiner	531	539	539	1609	4	Bronte Bennion	548	544	531	1623
5	Suzanne McGehee	522	525	352	1399	5	Lars Hagbom	539	543	537	1619
6	Janae Anderson	521	525		1046	6	Abby Curtis	526	529		1095
SENIOR						SMALL FRY					
1	Fred Buckley	572	554	562	1688	1	Elias Johnson	546	552		1098
2	Ike Hall	565	542	555	1662	2	Ella Fryberger	541	547		1088
3	Jim McMillan	541	550	548	1639						
4	Richard Baker	547	544	545	1636						
5	Alida Wright	538	541	530	1609						
6	Orville Graddock	522	525		1047						
7	Chuck Kendrick	526	514		1040						

Winners of the other divisions were Ray Padilla (Accompanist - 46x on stage!), Lori Schreiner (Dance Fiddle), Sylvie

and Angelina Johnson (Twin Fiddle) and Sandy James (Anything Goes). Ray was voted "Favorite Accompanist" and Nancy Padilla was voted "Favorite Fiddler."

A big "Thank You" goes out to a lot of folks who helped put the contest on. The Grasdocks and Teri Keith did another great job providing yet another year of outstanding trophies. Infinity Thomson, Katelyn Swanson and Wanda Schuh were especially helpful with registration, tabulation, etc. Cole Flikkema did a great job as the M.C., and Sandy James provided a first-class sound system. Then there is a big bunch of folks, far too many to name, without whom things would not have gone nearly so smoothly. Plans are already under way for the contest next year.

2017 FIDDLE CAMP

We are having two sessions of Fiddle Camp again in 2017: June 4-9 and 11-16. You can check the website (<http://www.montanafiddlers.org/index.html>) for details. The list of instructors reads like a "Who's Who" in the world of acoustic music, so you will want to register early to assure that you can attend. The instructor line up is not 100% complete so stay tuned for updates. The camp is gaining a reputation of providing the best instruction at the most reasonable cost, and it also serves the best food in the country.

UPCOMING FIDDLE CONTESTS

January 23 Montana Winter Fair, Lewistown MT. Katelyn Swanson and Infinity Thomson will be judging.

<http://www.montanawinterfair.com/competitions/montana-winter-fair-fiddle-contest>

February 18-19 Dillon Jr. Fiddlers Contest, Dillon MT. Contact Sandy James at ralexanderjames@yahoo.com for info.

April 8 Glacier Fiddle Festival, Kalispell <http://glacierfiddlefestival.blogspot.com>

April 29-30 Northwest Regional contest, Spokane, WA <http://northwestregionals.com>

Hope that 2017 is a great year for all of you!

Jim McMillan

MSOTFA President

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