

SPRING 2025 NEWSLETTER

Grand Rapids Federation of Musicians/AFM Local 56

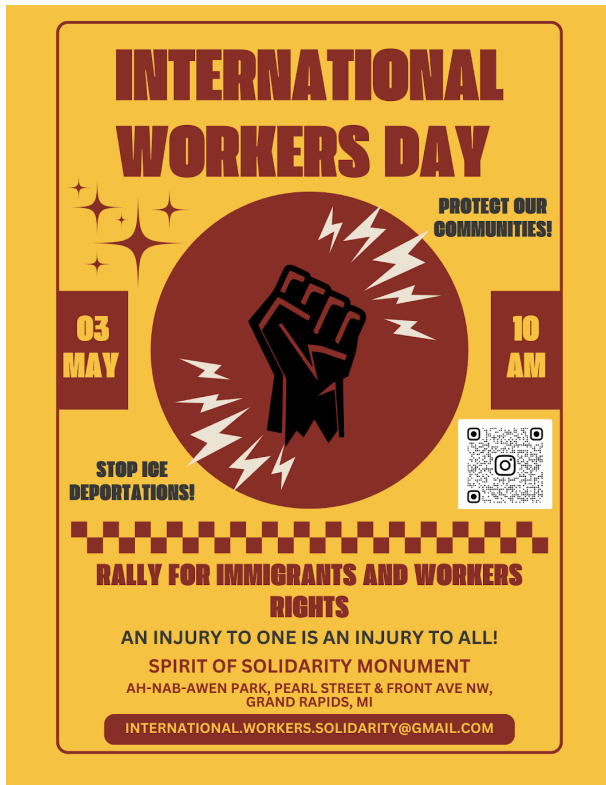


2025 AFM Local 56 Executive Board Members

Seated (left to right): Charles Johnson, Kevin Murphy, Christina Fong, and Sterling Jenkins.

Standing (left to right): Paul Austin, Carsten Forester, Bennie Keys, Barbara Corbato, and Robert Johnson.

Photo Credit: Daniel Terpstra/Terpstra Photography



JOIN US FOR A MAY RALLY!

AFM Local 56 proudly endorses the upcoming rally in support of International Workers Day, organized by the West Michigan Stagehands, IATSE Local 26.

WHEN? Beginning at 10:00 am on Saturday, May 3rd.

WHERE? Ah-Nab-Awen Park (Pearl Street and Front Avenue NW, Grand Rapids MI 49504).

If you go, be sure to wear your AFM Local 56 t-shirt! Don't have one yet? It's free for those who attend the rally. Stop by our office to pick up your free t-shirt before May 3rd.

IATSE Local 26 President Tom Burke expresses his appreciation of having AFM Local 56's support, saying that "we are stronger when we stand together, and we are making a stand for labor and immigrant rights in our country."

Mark your calendar and plan to join us with IATSE for this cause!



FEATURED GUESTS/MAY EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

Tuesday, May 13th, 5:00 pm, Sixth Floor/Masonic Center
233 Fulton Street E, Grand Rapids MI 49503

All are invited to attend our upcoming board meeting to hear from two important speakers. Lisa Bennett will explain our AD&D policy (available to all Local 56 members at no cost) and introduce other insurance options that are available to union members. Nancy Chaklos is assisting our work in organizing free-lance musicians who play at theaters in West Michigan. See you there!



Lisa Bennett

Public Relations/Marketing,
American Income Life
Insurance Company



Nancy Chaklos

VP/Theatre Musicians
Association; AFM Local 5
Executive Board member

UPDATE/MUSIC PERFORMANCE TRUST FUND

We are thrilled to announce that Local 56 was given a big boost to our MPTF allotment. For the 2025-26 season, we have been granted \$20,447.79, nearly a 50% increase from the previous season! This will be used to fund live performances in our communities.

As a reminder, MPTF performances must be free and open to the general public. Musicians will need to identify a sponsoring organization who is willing to contribute 50% of the total fee before the application is made, plus sign a Terms & Conditions form and a W-9 form. Musicians would be paid for one rehearsal and the performance (at set rates), cartage, and a 6% payment into each musician's AFM pension account. If approved by the MPTF, they will cover the other 50%.

Applications are submitted to the MPTF by Secretary-Treasurer Paul Austin at least thirty days before the performance date.

There are MPTF events which can be funded without a 50/50 split from a sponsoring organization. The following would be available from MPTF, covered 100% by the Local 56 allotment:

- Juneteenth (June 19, 2025)

- Black History Month (February 2026)

- Women's History Month (March 2026)

- Jazz Appreciation Month (April 2026)

- Music in the Public Schools (September 2025 to April 2026)

Last season, Local 56 applied for nearly fifty MPTF grants. We are pleased to report that all but one were fully funded by the MPTF.

Contact Paul Austin if you have any questions, or if you wish to apply for the upcoming 100% MPTF funding options listed above.

MEET OUR 2025 GRFM SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS!

Congratulations to the winners of our GRFM Madura and Erickson Scholarships.

Alexander Chung is the winner of our \$600 Madura Scholarship. A junior at East Grand Rapids High School, he will use the prize money to attend Interlochen's Intensive Viola Week. Alexander performed the Opus 85 Romanze by Max Bruch and is a private student of Local 56 member Leslie Van Becker.



The winner of our \$850 Erickson Scholarship is Iris Eppinga, a music major at Grand Valley State University. Her prize money will be given to Guarneri House towards a purchase of a double bass. Iris performed Sergei Koussevitzky's Chanson triste, is a private student of Local 56 member Mark Buchner, and the daughter of Local 56 member Alicia Eppinga.

The judges were Local 56 members Chris Martin, Jonathan Reed, and Kristen Shoup. This year, we offered to provide a pianist, Local 56 member Charles Hutchins, so that the cost of an accompanist would not deter students from entering the competition.

These scholarships, in memory of former AFM Local 56 members Robert Madura (GRS Principal Cellist) and Thomas A. Erickson (GRS Assistant Principal Bassist), are intended to further the musical education of deserving young musicians. Congratulations to Alexander Chung and Iris Eppinga, and a special thank you to the Local 56 members who made a donation to the GRFM Scholarship Fund.

MESSAGE FROM LOCAL 56 PRESIDENT BENNIE KEYS

Hello Local 56! I am pleased to pass along some very EXCITING NEWS! On May 13th, we will be having a meeting, in conjunction with some important guests, on how to organize our local theaters.

We will be joined by Nancy Chaklos, Vice-President of the Theatre Musicians Association, and Lisa Bennett, our local insurance representative.

Please attend and bring along any professional musician who is interested in joining Local 56, especially those who play either in clubs or bars, or at Grand Rapids Circle or Civic Theatre.

I was happy to see all who attended our meeting last month to discuss concerns that free-lance musicians in our area have, and we look forward to hearing from more of you at this next meeting. We want to increase the wages and improve the working conditions at Circle and Civic Theaters, but we can't do this without your help and input. That's why it is important to come to the May 13th meeting and participate in the discussion.

The meeting begins at 5:00 pm and will be held at the Masonic Center's Sixth Floor meeting room. We look forward to seeing you there.





NOTES FROM OUR SECRETARY-TREASURER PAUL AUSTIN

Showing up. Sometimes that's all it takes to make a difference. You don't even have say anything. Your presence says it all.

Recently, there were times when AFM Local 56 showed up for rallies in Grand Rapids. Last March, the USPS Letter Carriers union held an event at Calder Plaza. Sponsored by the Kenton-Lonia Labor Council, of which AFM Local 56 is one of their 33 members, the rally was one of

200 held nationwide in opposition of efforts to privatize the US Postal Service. I was happy to be joined by Local 56 board members Carsten Forester and Robert Johnson, plus Haijin Choi (Orchestra Committee Chair/GRS).



In April, thousands of people convened at Rosa Parks Circle in support of union rights. This was part of a nationwide effort to send a message "Hands Off Our Unions and Our Contracts." It was great to see Joshua Dreyer, a new member of Local 56, in attendance, as well as Nancy Yagiela, one of our long-time members. Thanks, Joshua and Nancy, for being there!

Please attend the rally on May 3rd that Local 56 has endorsed, in support of immigrant and labor rights. Remember, just showing up can make a difference.



SPECIAL EVENT/OUR 120th ANNIVERSARY!

Big news! As our charter with the American Federation of Musicians was signed on September 7, 1905, Local 56 will be celebrating our 120th anniversary this year. To do so, we are hosting a day of live music, free and open to the public.



When? Sunday, September 7th, 10:00 am to 10:00 pm

Where? Wealthy Theatre, 1130 Wealthy Street SE, Grand Rapids MI 49506

Local 56 members who wish to perform may complete our application form, which will be available on our website beginning June 1st. We encourage our free-lance musicians who had traditionally performed at the Festival of the Arts to perform at this special event. Note that applications will close on August 1st.

More details will be provided soon, but for now please plan on joining us for a day of celebrating the Grand Rapids Federation of Musicians on September 7th!

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