

SUMMER 2025 NEWSLETTER

Grand Rapids Federation of Musicians/AFM Local 56

SPECIAL ISSUE

120th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION



**Join Us For A Day of Live Music
Provided by Local 56 Members**

Sunday, September 7th
11:00 am to 9:00 pm
Free Admission & Parking

Wealthy Theatre
1130 Wealthy Street SE
Grand Rapids MI 49506

ANNIVERSARY AWARDS OUR 50+ YEAR MEMBERS

We offer a hearty congratulations to these fourteen musicians who have been members of AFM Local 56 for over 50 years!

65 years: Gretchen Weaver

A former violist with the Grand Rapids Symphony, Gretchen joined Local 56 in 1960 and remains active as a violinist, Celtic harpist, and storyteller. She continues to perform as a church musician and has recently recorded music for harp.

58 years: Philip Hamacher

An Executive Board member from 1971 to 1983, and our Business Manager from 1978 to 1983, Phil is proud to have a collection of all of his Local 56 membership cards since joining in 1967.

56 years: E Delmer Weliver

Upon moving to Interlochen in 1968, Del soon joined Local 56 and has been pleased to maintain his AFM membership ever since.

55 years: Kevin Murphy

Kevin joined Local 56 in 1970, has been Vice President since 2019, a Member at Large on our Executive Board from 2008 to 2019, and remains in-demand as a saxophonist, guitarist, and vocalist.

55 years: David Wells

The son of former Local 56 President and Secretary-Treasurer Ralph Wells, Dave joined Local 56 in 1970 and continues to be known as a trombonist and a music educator today.

52 years: Charles "Chip" King III

A long-time bassoonist with the Grand Rapids Symphony, Chip joined Local 56 in 1973 and now lives in Phoenix, where he actively performs as a freelance musician throughout Arizona.

52 years: Ava Ordman

The former Principal Trombonist with the Grand Rapids Symphony and Lansing Symphony Orchestra, Ava just retired from the position of Professor of Trombone at Michigan State University.

52 years: Gary Sironen

Gary served as Secretary-Treasurer of Local 56 for 25 years! He was Chair of the AFM's "International Musician" Committee from 1997 to 2016. Gary played trumpet and keyboards professionally, worked as a conductor and music director, and is a composer/song writer.

51 years: Michael Bowman

The former Principal Trumpeter of the Grand Rapids Symphony (who retired in 2015 after 41 years), Michael was a member of the Executive Board of Local 56 for many years. He also served on the bargaining committee for a number of GRS contract negotiations.

51 years: Ruth Bylsma

Ruth retired from the Grand Rapids Symphony in 2024 after being in the flute section for 50 years. She continues to freelance in the area.

51 years: Michael Hyde

A respected guitarist, Mike was named "Musician of the Year" in 2024 by the West Michigan Jazz Society.

51 years: Dawn Van Ark

A resident of Holland, Michigan, Dawn was a member of the Grand Rapids Symphony's cello section from 1974 to 2013. She grew up in a union household, as her father was a union shop steward.

51 years: Collette Vandenberg

Collette has been a violinist with the Grand Rapids Symphony since 1974, when she joined Local 56, and she still plays in the GRS.

51 years: Paul Zarzecki

In addition to having been a performer on the clarinet and tenor saxophone with many of the jazz legends, Paul is particularly known as a former music educator in West Michigan.

ANNIVERSARY AWARDS

OUR LIFE MEMBERS

Life members have been in good standing with AFM Local 56 for at least 35 consecutive years and have reached the age of 65. Congratulations to our 47 Life Members!

*Elizabeth Bert
Marilyn Branham
Sunny Cirlin
Kevin Flannery
Kathleen Gomez
Thomas Hagen
Michael Hyde
Christopher Kantner
Bennie Keys
Michael Kornacki
Michael Lutley
Diane McElfish Helle
Linda Missad
Kevin Murphy
Robert Nixon
James Sawyer
Gary Sironen
Lorene Turkalo
Leslie Van Becker
Eric Vander Stel
Lloyd "Elgin" Vines
Gretchen Weaver
David Wells
Paul Zarzecki*

*Michael Bowman
Ruth Bylsma
Edward Clifford
Christine Golden
Patricia Gordon
Philip Hamacher
Ronald K Johnson
Judith Kempf
Charles "Chip" King III
Elizabeth Lepak
Wright McCargar
Mary Jane Miller
Brian Morris
Linda Nelson
Ava Ordman
John Scandary
Nancy Steltmann
Dawn Van Ark
Collette Vandenberg
John Varineau
Robert Ward
Delmer Weliver
Nancy Yagiela*

ANNIVERSARY AWARDS OUR 25+ YEAR MEMBERS

We recognize those who have been members of AFM Local 56 for over 25 years. Congratulations to these 45 musicians!

*Vanessa Allen
Stacey Bosman Tanner
Jill Brown
Timothy Cary
Barbara Corbató
Megan Crawford
Alicia Eppinga
Caroline Freihofer
David Hall
Charles Hutchins
Charles Johnson
Nicolaus Kogon
Charley Lea
Thomas Lockwood
Christopher Martin
Alexander Miller
Elinore Morin
Sarah Peterson
Mary Rademacher Reed
Laurie Sears
Kristen Shoup
Eric Tanner
Kennen White*

*Paul Austin
Richard Britsch
Ross Burden
Sarah Constable
James Crawford
Michael Doyle
Christina Fong
Cherie Hagen
Lisa Honeycutt
Sterling Jenkins
Fred Knapp
Karen Krummel
Adam Liebert
Terrence Lower
Daniel Mattson
Susan Mora
David Peshlakai
Andrew Pool
Josh Schlachter
Gregory Secor
Stephen Talaga
Kevin Watt*

SCHEDULE OF PERFORMERS

September 7, 2025 Wealthy Theatre

- 11:00 am** **Local 56 Wind Ensemble, led by John Varineau.**
Music by Sousa, Copland, and Leo Sowerby, plus the premiere of our commissioned fanfare by Greg Scheer.
- 12:00 pm** **Perugino String Quartet.** *Eric Tanner and Christopher Martin, violins; Barbara Corbató, viola; Stacey Bosman Tanner, cello. Haydn's "Sunrise" Quartet, Opus 76, No 4.*
- 12:30 pm** **WINDFIRE: Flute and Percussion Spectacular.**
Paula Kasica, flute, piccolo, and alto flute; John Kasica, percussion. Music by Lou Harrison and others.
- 1:00 pm** **Castalia.** *Jenna Buchner, violin; Leslie Van Becker, viola; Alicia Eppinga, cello; Emily Grabinski, piano. Music by French composer Louise Hérítte-Viardot.*
- 1:30 pm** **David Hall.** *Music for solo marimba.*
- 2:00 pm** **Mary Rademacher.** *Vocal selections will include music from the Great American Songbook, With Tom Hagen, piano; Cherie Hagen, drums; Michael Lutley, saxophone; Elgin Vines, bass.*
- 2:30 pm** **Beth Colpean.** *Music for solo harp by Duke Ellington.*
- 3:00 pm** **Trillium String Quartet.** *Diane Helle and Linda Nelson, violins; Andrew Pool, viola; Lee Copenhaver, cello. Music for string quartet by Beethoven and James Whitbourne.*
- 3:30 pm** **Gretchen Weaver.** *Storytelling. "Friends Time-Travel," with violin and Celtic harp by our venerable member of Local 56. With Larry Rhodes, bass; Bennie Keys, drums.*

- 4:00 pm** **Ben Traverse.** *Folk songs sung by Ben and accompanied on the guitar and banjo.*
- 4:30 pm** **Wright McCargar.** *Jazz pianist. With Dave DeVos, bass; Alex Hamel, drums.*
- 5:00 pm** **The Back Door Blues Band.** *Tim Hiler and Nick Hiler, guitars; Herman Marshall, bass guitar; Thion Charity, drums.*
- 5:30 pm** **Just Friends.** *Adam McMillan, keyboards; Anthony Gant, guitar; Kevin Murphy, saxophone; Fred Mitchell, bass guitar; Richard Sharkey, vocals; Bennie Keys, drums.*
- 6:00 pm** **Asamu Johnson & the Associates of the Blues.**
Asamu Johnson, composer, lead vocals and bass guitar; Adam McMillan, keyboards; Curtis Woods, rhythm guitar; Melvin Clark, lead guitar; Thion Charity, drums, Craig Robinson, saxophone.
- 6:30 pm** **Brian Morris.** *Guitarist/vocalist.*
- 7:00 pm** **Amy Young & Dave DeVos.** *Original music by singer/songwriter Amy Young. With Dave DeVos, bass.*
- 7:30 pm** **Evidence Jazz Group.** *Matt Sumner, trumpet and flugelhorn; Michael S. Doyle, saxophones; Steve Talaga, piano; Tom Lockwood, bass; Fred Knapp, drums.*
- 8:00 pm** **GR Just Us Band.** *Fred Mitchell, electric bass; Don Newton, drums; José Ortiz, electric guitar; Ron Evans, trumpet; Darryl Malone, saxophone.*

Visit our website's events calendar for more details:
<https://grandrapidsmusicians.org/about-local-56/history/120th-anniversary/>

PROCLAMATION

"Grand Rapids Federation of Musicians Day"

from Grand Rapids Mayor David LaGrand



City of Grand Rapids, Michigan
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

DAVID LAGRAND
MAYOR

PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS, the Grand Rapids Federation of Musicians signed its charter with the American Federation of Musicians (AFM) on September 7, 1905, becoming AFM Local 56, with the mission to promote a better and more rewarding livelihood for skilled professional musicians and to enrich the cultural life of our society; and

WHEREAS, the Grand Rapids Federation of Musicians, AFM Local 56, proudly represents nearly 300 members across west, central, and northern Michigan; and

WHEREAS, the year 2025 marks the 120th anniversary of the Grand Rapids Federation of Musicians, to be celebrated on September 7, 2025, with a day of live music performed by its members;

Now, THEREFORE, I, David LaGrand, Mayor of the City of Grand Rapids, do hereby recognize on this day of September 7, 2025, the

Grand Rapids Federation of Musicians Day

and encourage all residents and visitors to join in celebrating the many musical and cultural contributions of AFM Local 56, which help make our city a vibrant and inspiring place to live, work, and enjoy.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David LaGrand", is written over a horizontal line.

David LaGrand

MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT BENNIE KEYS

Hello Local 56! I hope that your summer is going well, and I hope that all of you are just as excited as I am about the big celebration for our 120th anniversary on September 7, 2025! It will be a wonderful event, and I can't wait to see all of you there.



As Local 56 President, it will be an honor for me to present AFM anniversary pins to so many of our members, especially to Gretchen Weaver, in honor of her 65 years in Local 56. In fact, I will be performing with Gretchen at our 120th Anniversary Celebration. Do make it a point to attend her performance at 3:30 pm that day, so that you can join me in congratulating Gretchen on this milestone achievement. She is our most senior member of the Grand Rapids Federation of Musicians, signing up for Local 56 membership in 1960 when becoming a member of the Grand Rapids Symphony's viola section.

Please come out and bring your friends and family to our day of live music, which will showcase our many talented Local 56 musicians. See you then!



NOTES FROM SECRETARY-TREASURER PAUL AUSTIN

Our 120th Anniversary Celebration has been on my mind since I started this position in January of 2024. After many months of planning, our special day is approaching quickly.

I cannot think of a better way for us to celebrate this milestone than by giving a free concert to our community which will feature the many talented musicians of Local 56.

We encourage you to attend our day of live music in the historic Wealthy Theatre, which was built around the time when we signed our charter with the American Federation of Musicians. Bring your family and friends to enjoy a variety of musical genres, ranging from classical to jazz.

Nearly a third of our membership will be recognized on September 7th by receiving 50-year, Life member, and 25-year AFM pins, thanks to their longevity with Local 56. We are pleased to honor those who have devoted their lives to our profession, as well as their dedication to the Grand Rapids Federation of Musicians.

It's not every day that an organization turns 120. We hope that you will join us, even if it's just for a few minutes, to recognize this special moment for AFM Local 56.



AFM Local 56 aims to protect the interest and welfare of its members, to establish a minimum scale of prices to be charged for professional services, and to promote good faith and fair dealings between its members. Having signed a charter with the American Federation of Musicians on September 7, 1905, Local 56 has about 300 members today. Our jurisdiction covers west, central, and northern Michigan.

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