

SPRING 2026 NEWSLETTER

Grand Rapids Federation of Musicians/AFM Local 56



The wage scales for AFM Local 56 have been adjusted!

Recently the Executive Board discovered that, for the past eight years, a 3% annual increase to our minimum rates has not been in effect, as it had been presented by a working committee and approved.

We have recalculated our minimum rates accordingly for all engagements in our jurisdiction (Schedules 1, 2, and 3 of our bylaws), effective 01 May 2026.

Click on this link to view a PDF of our updated rates:

<https://grandrapidsmusicians.org/files/2026/04/AFM-Local-56-Wage-List-effective-01-MAY-2026.pdf>

TRUMP OUT!
GRAND RAPIDS MAY DAY COMMITTEE

INTERNATIONAL WORKERS DAY


RALLY FOR WORKERS AND IMMIGRANT RIGHTS

IATSE 26 AFM 56 GRE A IWW

SAT MAY 2ND | **6PM** Fountain Street Church
24 Fountain St NE, Grand Rapids
Hear from local labor leaders and activists on how we can meet this moment


SPECIAL GUEST! : ABDUL EL-SAYED
Candidate for U.S Senate
& Music by AFM local 56 member Carsten Forester

AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL!



ICE OUT!

INTERNATIONAL.WORKERS.SOLIDARITY@GMAIL.COM



MAYDAY_OR

JOIN OUR MAY DAY RALLY!

AFM Local 56 is partnering with other labor organizations in our area to co-sponsor a rally in support of workers and immigrant rights on International Workers Day.

WHEN? Saturday, 02 MAY 2026, beginning at 6:00 pm.

WHERE? Fountain Street Church
24 Fountain Street NE
Grand Rapids MI 49503

FORMAT? Political candidates and labor leaders will be the guest speakers. There also will be group singing of labor songs, led by Local 56 Executive Board Member-at-Large Carsten Forester.

WHO ELSE IS A CO-SPONSOR? The West Michigan Stage Hands Union (IATSE), Grand Rapids Educators Association (GRE A), and the Grand Rapids Chapter of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW).

WHAT TO WEAR? Be sure to wear our AFM Local 56 t-shirt, free to those who attend our rallies. Stop by our office to pick up your free t-shirt in advance of this event.

HOW CAN I HELP? Mark your calendar and plan to join us for this important cause!



UPDATE/MUSIC PERFORMANCE TRUST FUND

Local 56 has been notified that our MPTF allotment for the 2026-27 season has increased to \$22,678.00! This will be used by Local 56 musicians to perform free concerts of live music in our communities, beginning in May.

To participate in an MPTF event, Local 56 members are to line up an organization that would serve as their sponsor (willing to contribute 50% of the total fee before the grant application is made, and sign the Terms & Conditions and W-9 forms). If approved, the MPTF grant will cover the remaining 50% of the cost.

Musicians would be paid for one rehearsal and the performance at the new AFM Local 56 minimum wage rates, cartage (for those with equipment/large instruments), and a 6% contribution into each musician's AFM pension account.

There are MPTF events which can be funded without a 50/50 split from a sponsoring organization. The following would be available with 100% funding by the

MPTF:	Juneteenth	18, 19, and 20 JUNE 2026
	NEW! America's 250th Celebration	1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 JULY 2026
	Black History Month	FEB 2027
	Women's History Month	MAR 2027
	Jazz Appreciation Month	APR 2027
	Music in the Public Schools	SEPT 2026 to APR 2027

Applications are submitted to the MPTF by Secretary/Treasurer Paul Austin at least thirty days before the performance date. We have been informed that MPTF will no longer accept late applications, so do be mindful that 18 MAY will be the deadline for Juneteenth events, for example.

Call/text Paul Austin at (616) 451-4374 if you have any questions about MPTF grants.

Please know that funding from the MPTF unites our community, revives our local economy, and enriches lives by providing free, live music to all!



COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS FROM THE MPTF

Local 56 members! Are you currently a college student, or do you have children who are in college? If so, please consider applying for the Music Performance Trust Fund Scholarships. Note that the deadline to apply is 31 MAY 2026.

MUSIC FAMILY SCHOLARSHIP

SUPPORTING STUDENTS FROM MUSIC FAMILIES ACROSS GENERATIONS

WHO SHOULD APPLY

Students pursuing higher education who meet one of the following:

- A dependent of an AFM member
- A current member of the AFM



APPLICATION INCLUDES

- Online application
- Response to an annual prompt
- Union Verification
- Basic student information



SCAN TO APPLY OR LEARN MORE

scholar@musicpf.org | musicpf.org | [@themptf](https://twitter.com/themptf)

MUSIC'S FUTURE SCHOLARSHIP

SUPPORTING THE NEXT GENERATION OF MUSIC PROFESSIONALS

WHO SHOULD APPLY

Students pursuing degrees in

- Music Education
- Music Performance
- Music Therapy
- Conducting



APPLICATION INCLUDES

- Online application
- Response to an annual prompt
- Basic student information



SCAN TO APPLY OR LEARN MORE

scholar@musicpf.org | musicpf.org | [@themptf](https://twitter.com/themptf)

Quick Notes

- Past recipients may apply again
- Students may apply for only one scholarship
- Undergraduate through PhD students are eligible

The Local 56 family has been fortunate to have had several recipients of MPTF college scholarships over the past two years: Dana DeLellis (Local 56 member Anthony DeLellis), Riley Sironen (Local 56 member Gary Sironen), and Jaden Knapp (Local 56 member Fred Knapp). Congratulations to Dana, Riley, and Jaden!

Best wishes to all who apply, and good luck for their college studies.

MEET OUR 2026 GRFM SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS!

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



Levi Davis is the winner of the Erickson Scholarship for his performance of the Koussevitzky Double Bass Concerto. He will use the \$850 award towards an instrument purchase at Guarneri House.



Bridget Parlmer won the Madura String Scholarship, performing the Saint-Saëns Cello Concerto No 1, third movement. She will use the \$600 award towards private cello lessons this summer.

This year's judges were Local 56 members Stacey Bosman-Tanner, Kristen Shoup, and Aaron Tenney. So that paying for an accompanist would not deter anyone from applying for our scholarships, we arranged for Local 56 pianist Charles Hutchins to accompany any applicants upon request. We are very thankful that St Mark's Episcopal Church allowed us to hold our auditions in their beautiful, historical building.

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

<https://grandrapidsmusicians.org/resources/scholarship-donation/>

MESSAGE FROM LOCAL 56 PRESIDENT BENNIE KEYS

Hello Local 56! I am happy to announce that we are getting more money from the Music Performance Trust Fund this year. We look forward to having many Local 56 musicians take advantage of the MPTF money that is available to us, using it in a positive way.

Last year we were fortunate in that the folks at MPTF kindly approved our grants that went over our allocated amount.

This happened because other Locals didn't take advantage of the MPTF opportunities that were afforded to them, and the overall budgeted grant money for the MPTF needed to be used.

Don't forget to sign up at AFM Entertainment (afmentertainment.org) so that your band will be listed on our website for gigs, including the upcoming celebrations in July. By doing so, your group will be listed under "Find Musicians" on our website (grandrapidsmusicians.org). The sponsors of the Grand Rapids 175th Birthday and the United States 250th Anniversary celebration committees will be selecting Local 56 Bands to perform from those listed on our website at "Find Musicians," so it is important for your group to be listed there if you want to be considered for this work.

As announced in this newsletter, we have new minimum wage scales for Local 56 performances, which includes MPTF. Make sure to keep your annual membership dues paid up so you can be eligible for MPTF work.

Thanks for being the most important part of Local 56: a MEMBER! Have a great spring and summer, and I look forward to seeing you around at gigs.





NOTES FROM OUR SECRETARY/TREASURER PAUL AUSTIN

Acting for the collective good. That's what I have learned from being on the planning committee for the May Day Rally, in support of workers and immigrant rights.

Last year, I was honored to be a speaker at the May Day Rally. During my speech, I noted that all of us have immigrant connections. My example? My mother, who will turn 100 years old in July. She came to America in the 1950s from a war-torn country without being able to read or speak English. Without any formal training, my mom learned English by looked over our shoulders while we did our homework at the kitchen table. By the 1970s, she had become our town's librarian, which truly is remarkable.

Now take a moment to look at your past. We all have an immigrant story. Know that an assault upon immigrants is an affront upon your family and its heritage.

For the past several months, I have attended meetings with leaders from other unions in our area to plan the 2026 May Day Rally. As a result, I have learned about the plights of other union members in Michigan and, in turn, they have learned a bit about us, too.

We are only stronger when we stand together, and our upcoming event is the perfect time to do so. You are being asked to join workers, educators, artists, and community members for an evening of solidarity and action on Saturday, 02 MAY, at Fountain Street Church, beginning at 6:00 pm. But why? We are coming together to demand dignity, safety, and justice for all workers and for immigrant communities.

You aren't being asked to make a donation, other than donating your time that evening. Won't you join us for this year's May Day Rally? I hope to see you there, acting for the collective good.



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 nearly 320 members today. Our jurisdiction covers west, central, and northern Michigan.

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