# Quarterly Newsletter

November 2026

## ALASKA FOLK FESTIVAL

Festival 52: April 5-11, 2027

To the Alaska Folk Festival Family,

We have entered the fall doldrums here in Southeast Alaska—rainy, dark, and quiet. But this is the time of year when you can really lean into your community, with house concerts, dances, dinners, board games, and of course planning for the 52nd annual Alaska Folk Festival. As usual, it's going to be a good one! And despite the days getting shorter, things are looking a bit brighter around Alaska. I can feel a slight breeze of optimism as people reject the fear mongering and division that have left far too many people struggling while precious few get ahead. Hopefully that means we can all get together in April with an extra dose of joy.

Speaking of April, we haven't been sitting idle! I won't spoil the surprise, so read ahead to see who we're bringing to Juneau this year. I couldn't be more excited for our 2027 Guest Artist and Guest Dance Band—I know they'll fit right in. We also have some exciting announcements regarding our poster artist and guest caller, but you'll have to wait until the next newsletter for those announcements (the suspense!). As always, performer, dance band, workshop, and volunteer applications will open shortly after the new year. For now, make sure to renew your memberships, encourage your friends to become members, and help us continue to put on one of the few festivals in the country that is completely free to attend! Don't be a stranger!

- Josh Fortenbery


## Board of Directors

**President** Josh Fortenbery (exp. 2027)

**Vice President** Kennedy Kruchoski (exp. 2029)

**Treasurer** Hannah Bailey (exp. 2028)

**Secretary** Hiram Henry (exp. 2027)

**Board Member** Chris Meade (exp. 2029)

**Board Member** Cyde Coil (exp. 2029)

**Board Member** Kiel Renick (exp. 2029)

**Board Member** Hannah Wilson (exp. 2029)

**Board Member** Reber Stein (exp. 2027)



## Alaska Folk Festival

**PO Box 21748, Juneau, Alaska 99802-1748**
**www.akfolkfest.org**

**General:** info@akfolkfest.org

**Membership:** membership@akfolkfest.org

**Ads:** ads@akfolkfest.org

# Jontavious Willis
## 2027 Guest Artist



**Jontavious Willis is resolved in his mission: to reinvigorate today's Blues with the spirit of the past.** Inspired by a time when the Blues were plentiful and rhythm reigned supreme, Jontavious leverages his unique sound—a synthesis of his Georgia heritage and reverence for traditional Blues—to get the world dancing again. A Grammy-nominated musician and songwriter, Jontavious performs original, toe-tapping tunes in the style of Delta, Piedmont, Texas, and Gospel Blues. Dynamic vocals, technical prowess, and an abundance of Southern charm keep Jontavious sending jolts of vitality through the Blues community.

Jontavious was born and raised in rural Georgia, an environment with deep cultural roots that provides the inspiration he has continuously drawn upon to create his unique sound. He spent much of his childhood singing Gospel music at the Mount Pilgrim Baptist Church with his grandfather, which provided him his first setting to perform for an audience. An early phenom, his passion for the Blues was sparked at age 14 when he came across a YouTube video of Muddy Waters playing "Hoochie Coochie Man." He achieved widespread acclaim when living legend Taj Mahal invited Jontavious to accompany him onstage in 2015, with Taj describing him as his "Wonderboy." Jontavious was invited to open for Taj Mahal and Keb' Mo' during their joint TajMo tour in 2018, giving him an opportunity to present his work on a national stage.

*Blue Metamorphosis*, his acoustic debut album released in 2016, garnered rave reviews in *Living Blues* and *Blues & Rhythm*and won the Blues Foundation's International Blues Challenge 2018 Award for Best Self-Produced CD. His Grammy-nominated sophomore album, *Spectacular Class*, sees Jontavious survey an array of Blues styles with lively ensemble performances. His most recent album, *Jontavious Willis' West Georgia Blues* earned the Charles Cros Award in 2025. Jontavious features prominently in solo shows and festivals across the world, sharing his unique blend of time-honored yet modern, intellectual yet danceable Blues with all.

# The Onlies

## 2027 Guest Dance Band



**The Onlies are a longstanding collective of young friends defining a powerful new generation of stringband music.**
Described as “the best old-time stringband out there” (Songlines), their music moves with a pulsating drive, sharp arrangements, and rich vibration — it resounds with the present.

Multi-instrumentalists and vocalists Sami Braman, Riley Calcagno, and Leo Shannon formed The Onlies in Seattle as young kids, bringing in celebrated guitarist/singer Vivian Leva 10 years later. “ Their fourth album, You Climb The Mountain, marks 20 years as a band. It was recorded by Grammy winner Joel Savoy and powered by the unmistakable bass groove of Nokosee Fields as it takes listeners on a climb up no ordinary mountain. If it sounds like a volcanic journey, it is—with fiddles, banjos, guitars, bass, autoharp, harmonium, electric guitar, and two to four-part vocal harmonies, in a generous 15 tracks including a cameo from Bluegrass legend Alice Gerrard.

The Onlies have earned first place at the Appalachian Stringband Festival in Clifftop, WV, and are currently Artistic Directors of Fiddle Tunes in Port Townsend, Wash., one of the largest and most venerable fiddle festivals in the country. As individuals, they are members of Viv & Riley, Willie Watson (Sami), and Bonnie "Prince" Billy (Leo). As influential fiddler Bruce Molsky says. “all four of the Onlies are shining stars. Together, what impresses me most about them is that they’ve grabbed this old music we all love by the reins and dragged it into the 21st century.” Indeed, you can hear their joy and decades of playing with one another in an “energy so palpable and vivid, it’s like you’ve been transported into the center of their sonic world, burrowed deep down with the variegated melodies and sparkling string-band grooves” (Bandcamp Daily).

# WELCOME ON BOARD!

## Kiel Renick



Kiel Renick first moved to Juneau in 2009 and folk fest is one of the unique community treasures that has brought him back and kept him here. With a fondness for music that far exceeds his capacity to make it, he is excited and maybe even a bit honored for the chance to contribute to making the magic happen these next few years.

## Kennedy Kruchoski



Kennedy attended her first Alaska Folk Festival in 2023 before moving to Juneau a few months later. She looks forward to giving back to Juneau's supportive and welcoming community of musicians and music-lovers who have made her feel so at home since her arrival. She grew up exploring music through piano lessons and middle/high school band and choir, and will take just about every opportunity to make music with her friends. When she's not doing that, you can find her out on a local trail with her dog, making elaborate meals at home with her partner, or in search of skiable snow. She's grateful for the opportunity to serve on the AFF Board, and looks forward to seeing you in April!

# ADVERTISE IN THE AFF PROGRAM
## DUE MARCH 1, 2027

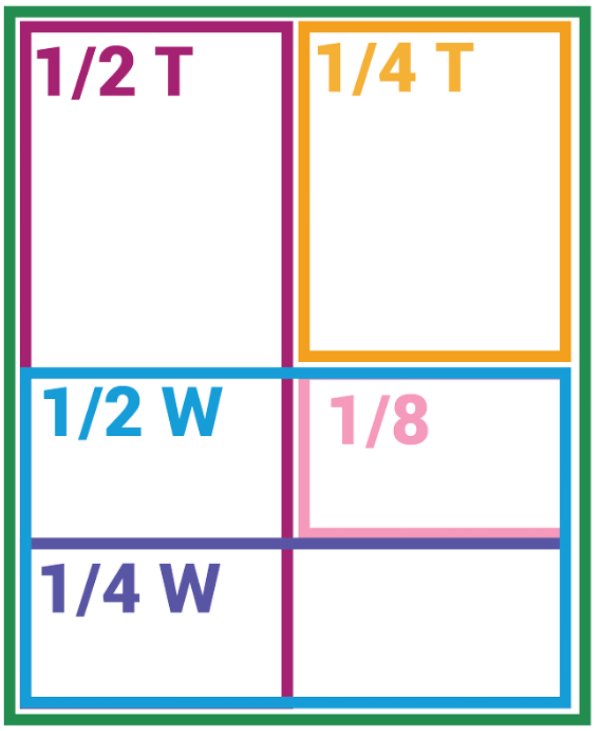
The Alaska Folk Festival provides a week of community-based performances, workshops, and connection to Juneau locals and visitors, as well as significant increases in local business! Exact viewership of the program is difficult to predict, but we estimate 5,000 - 6,000 views over the week, and 2,000 printed programs. The Alaska Folk Festival is always free, and your financial support as an advertiser is crucial in maintaining our mission. Reserve an ad space today!

Do you have donated services, equipment, or cash you'd like to offer as in-kind trade for ad space? Let us know! All trade is dollar-for-dollar value, rounding up to the nearest appropriate ad size. For example, $157.00 in donated services would qualify for a quarter-page black-and-white ad.

**AD SPECS & NOTES:**

- All artwork should be high-resolution for print (300dpi).
- File preferences: PDF or TIFF.
- Conversion of a low-res JPG to PDF or TIFF will not magically result in a high-res file. Please reach out if you need help with file types or ad creation.
- You may reserve an ad at any time by emailing ads@akfolkfest.org with your name & ad size.
- Final artwork is due by end of day Sunday, March 1, 2027, emailed to **ads@akfolkfest.org**.
- Do you need assistance with ad creation? AFF is happy to help you design for an additional fee. Design requests must be made by Sunday, February 14th.

| AD SIZE | DIMEN-SIONS | PRICE |
|---|---|---|
| Full Page | 6"w x 7.5"t 1800x2250 px | $900 color $750 b&w |
| 1/2 Page Wide | 6.0"w x 3.69"t 1800x1107 px | $475 color $375b&w |
| 1/2 Page Tall | 2.94"w x 7.5" t 882x2250 px | $475 color $375 b&w |
| 1/4 Page Wide | 6.0"w x 1.82"t 1800x546 px | $250 color $175 b&w |
| 1/4 Page Tall | 3.69"w x 2.94"t 1107x882 px | $250 color $175 b&w |
| 1/8 Page | 2.94"w x 1.82" t 882x546 px | $125 color $90 b&w |



# RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

## Alaska Folk Festival Membership Form

*All members receive AFF newsletters and are invited to the AFF Annual Meeting in April. Benefactors, Patrons, and Friends will be listed in the future festival program. Donations are tax deductible according to law (EIN #92-0098258).*

NAME _____
MAILING _____
CITY / ST _____
ZIP _____
EMAIL _____

Please select your membership level and write your desired donation amount.

☐ BENEFACTOR ($500+) $_____
☐ PATRON ($150 - $499) $_____
☐ FRIEND ($50 - $149) $_____
☐ MEMBER ($25 - $49) $_____
☐ PAY AS YOU CAN $_____

**List me in the program as:**

_____
☐Anonymous

Newsletter - we're going green!

Unless you specifically request it, we'll email all future newsletters to you!

☐ EMAIL _____
☐ PRINT (send to mailing address)

***NEW! YOUR DONATION ONLINE CAN NOW BE RECURRING!*** Never forget to renew again! Visit www.akfolkfest.org to make your contribution online. If you prefer paper, please fully complete this form and mail back to: Alaska Folk Festival, PO Box 21748, Juneau AK 99802

Payment Method

☐ CHECK ENCLOSED
☐ CASH ENCLOSED
☐ CREDIT CARD:

_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
exp: _ _ /_ _ cvc: _ _ _ ZIP _ _ _ _ _
Signature: _____

## Want to contribute your art to AFF 52?

We are looking for a main stage backdrop artist for this year's festival! If interested, please email us at info@akfolkfest.org. **Deadline to apply January 10th.**

## More questions about AFF 52?

Stay tuned for our January newsletter! We'll share info about performer applications, the poster artist, volunteer opportunities, and so much more...