



Artwork by Emily Isbell

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Letter from the President
- Join the CTBA!
- Support the CTBA Through Your Employer
- CTBA Memorial Fest Recap
- CTBA Annual Meeting & Show
- CTBA Scholarship Update
- CTBA Bluegrass Guide Vol. 2
- TX State Guitar & Banjo Championships
- Bluegrass Pride
- Across the Way: CTBA Member-Band Feature
- Spinning Wax
- CTBA Member-Bands
- CTBA Business Members

---

## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



Happy summer y'all! This quarter, the topic on my mind is...CTBA band memberships.

The CTBA, of course, is a membership-based organization. (If you're not already a member, please consider joining! More info at [CentralTexasBluegrass.org/Join](https://CentralTexasBluegrass.org/Join).) And our membership numbers are strong, as good as they've been during my time on the CTBA Board of Directors. But you know what's really strong? Band memberships. As I write this, we have nineteen - **NINETEEN!** - **member-bands**. I've never seen anything approaching that kind of number before.

What does it mean? Two things, I think. First, I hope the number reflects the

value the CTBA brings to bluegrass bands in our community. I've said it for years, my \$35 band membership has brought me oodles of gigs, it's the best deal in town. But secondly, I'm..not sure there were nineteen bluegrass bands in central Texas when I moved to Austin 10+ years ago. Bluegrass is growing. Bluegrass in central Texas is growing. And, not incidentally, a new generation of musicians are embracing the music. I sincerely hope the CTBA is doing its job to nurture and support our community as best we can.

And - one last note - I absolutely love what **Lillian Werbin** and **Bluegrass Pride** say below: "We want to make sure that if you love bluegrass, then bluegrass loves you right back." Amen.

As always, I'll see y'all out there. Say howdy, or feel free reach out anytime at [President@CentralTexasBluegrass.org](mailto:President@CentralTexasBluegrass.org).

*Jon Lundbom*  
*President, CTBA*

---

## JOIN THE CTBA!



I just said it, but we don't say it often enough - you (yes, you!) should **become a CTBA member** today!

The CTBA is a membership organization, we are able to do what we do only so long as our membership is

strong. CTBA membership is **cheap** - starting at only \$25/year - and comes with a **ton of benefits**. With even more benefits for **band** and **business** members! You can read about it all and sign up today at [CentralTexasBluegrass.org/Join](http://CentralTexasBluegrass.org/Join).

---

## SUPPORT THE CTBA THROUGH YOUR EMPLOYER

*By Hannah Spooner-Giardino, CTBA Board Member*

The Central Texas Bluegrass Association is now registered with **Benevity**, a platform many companies use to manage **charitable giving** and **donation matching**.



If your employer offers matching gifts through Benevity, **your donation to the CTBA could go twice as far!** Please take a second and check your

company's **giving portal** to see if you can support CTBA through a matched donation.

---

## CTBA MEMORIAL FEST RECAP

*By Hannah Spooner-Giardino, CTBA Board Member*

Another successful CTBA Memorial Fest is in the books! As we do, we kicked off the day with some **jamming** before settling in for live sets from **CTBA member-bands Across the Way and Strawberry Flats** (that's me!). Big thanks to CTBA Business Member **St. Elmo Springdale** for generously hosting us (and don't forget to check out St. Elmo's **Thursday bluegrass nights**). We also **raffled off** two guitars to benefit the Central Texas Bluegrass Association, raising (along with **merch sales**) **just about \$600** to support scholarships, jams, events, and other efforts to keep bluegrass alive and thriving in Central Texas. Thanks to everyone who came out and helped make it a great day for the Central Texas Bluegrass community!





---

## CTBA ANNUAL MEETING & SHOW

The CTBA is thrilled to announce that our **47th Annual Meeting & Show** will take place on **Sunday, November 16th**. We'll be meeting at **Meanwhile Brewing** (3901 Promontory Point Dr, Austin) for lots of jamming and performances, headlined by the one and only **Volume Five!**



This event will be **free and open to the public** - let's make some new bluegrass fans and sign up some new CTBA members!

Much, much, much more information to come. But, for now, mark your

## CTBA SCHOLARSHIP UPDATE

The CTBA is thrilled to announce we have awarded another **Willa Beach-Porter Scholarship** for 2025. Congratulations to CTBA member **Simon Welch**, who will be attending the **Mandolin & Banjo Week at the Swannanoa Gathering** this summer!

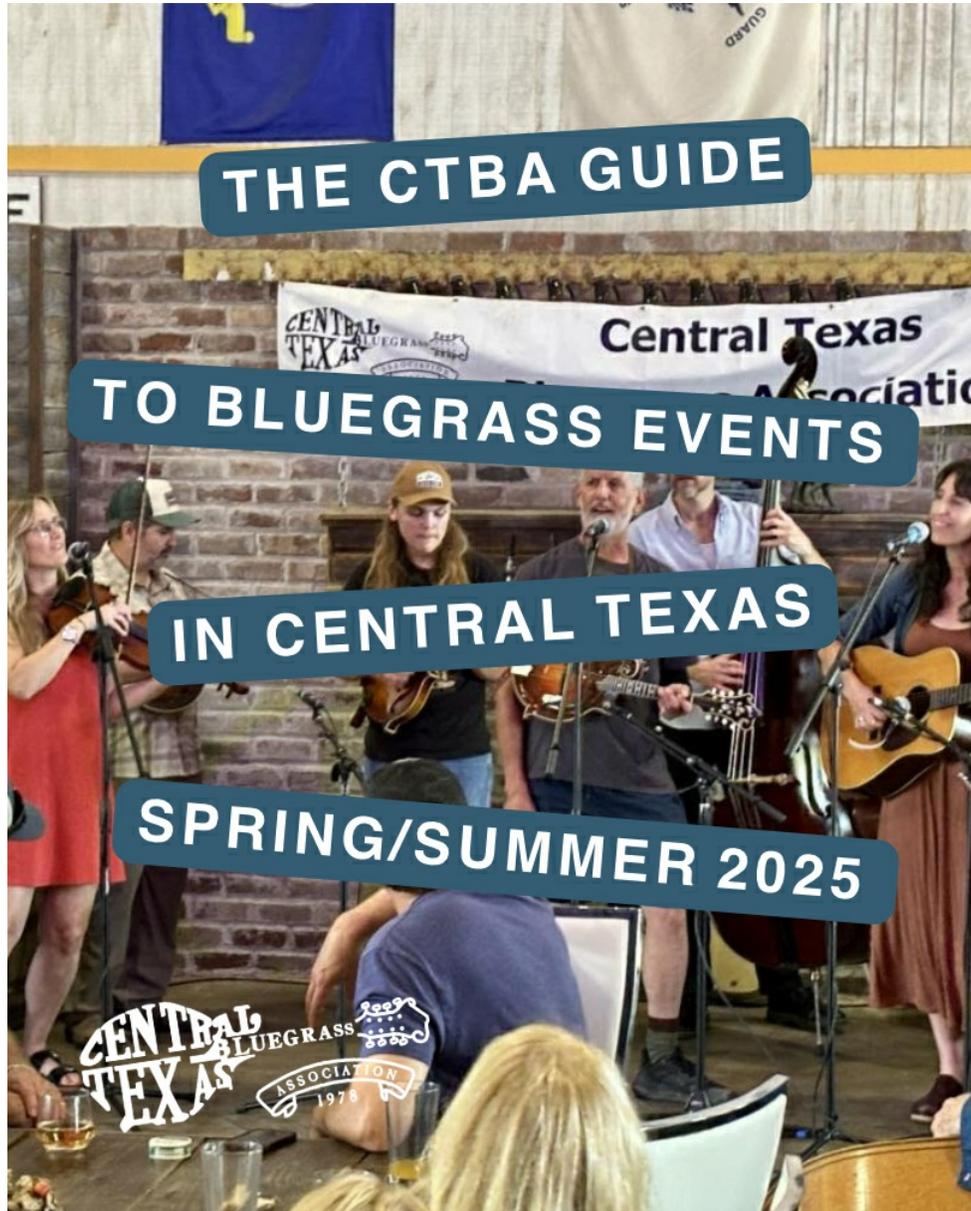
As many CTBA members know, Simon is a regular at the CTBA Sunday Bluegrass Jam and a fantastic young picker, indeed. And as per usual, we expect to be left in the dust by the fall. Have a great time, Simon. And, again, congrats!



The CTBA is also super-duper excited to announce that we awarded CTBA member **Stacy Jackson** a scholarship to **Camp Bluegrass**. As previously discussed, Camp Bluegrass is now under the sage guidance of our good friend **Gerald Jones**. Camp Bluegrass 2025 is taking place in **Loveland, TX**, next week, **July 13-18th**. If you're not already registered, I have to imagine there's still a little time to sign up. **Many thanks** to Gerald for his generous donation to the CTBA, **huge congratulations** to Stacy, and best wishes to everybody attending the **38th year** of Camp Bluegrass!



Hey look at that, it's the second edition of the new **CTBA Bluegrass Guide!** A handy-dandy, social-media-friendly guide to what's happening here in town. Check it out at [CentralTexasBluegrass.org/Bluegrass-Guide!](https://CentralTexasBluegrass.org/Bluegrass-Guide!)



As always, please let us know if there are things you would like to see included in future editions. And please email [CTBA@CentralTexasBluegrass.org](mailto:CTBA@CentralTexasBluegrass.org) if you know of an event happening in our area that should be on our radar!

---

## 2025 TEXAS STATE GUITAR & BANJO CHAMPIONSHIPS

In case you missed the news, the **Texas State Guitar and Banjo Championships** are back! And the CTBA is thrilled to once again sponsor this fantastic event.



August 2, 2025

# Texas State Championships

BANJO & GUITAR



DOUBLETREE  
BY HILTON™  
DALLAS NEAR THE GALLERIA

The **Bluegrass Heritage Foundation** will be presenting the **Texas State Championship** contests for **guitar** and **banjo**. This year's contest will be held on **Saturday August 2**, at the **Doubletree Hotel Near the Galleria**, concurrent to the **Farmers Branch Bluegrass Festival**. Contestant registration is now open. Learn more and register today at [BluegrassHeritage.org/Texas-State-Championships](https://BluegrassHeritage.org/Texas-State-Championships).

---

## BLUEGRASS PRIDE

*By Chelsea Burns, CTBA Board Member*

**Lillian Werbin**, Board Chair of **Bluegrass Pride** and CEO of **Elderly Instruments**, joined CTBA Board Member **Chelsea Burns** for a chat about the organization and its efforts to foster a welcoming space for LGBTQ+ bluegrass musicians. As Bluegrass Pride notes on their website, "We want current bluegrassers to know that they are loved and treasured for who they are and the music they make... We want to make sure that if you love bluegrass, then bluegrass loves you right back."

*The following interview has been condensed for brevity.*



### **What are the goals of Bluegrass Pride?**

We seek to promote LGBTQ+ musicians in bluegrass, and to create opportunities that are safe and welcoming.

### **What challenges do you see for LGBTQ+ musicians in bluegrass?**

All of the challenges that you would see in any music community. There is still stigma attached to this group—recognizing that we are all people with needs and wants, like everyone else.

Like all musicians, Covid hit us hard; when opportunities have returned, they haven't necessarily always included LGBTQ+ musicians. It's important to highlight and promote these folks, because they are often overlooked for booking and performances.

### **What can local bluegrass communities do to be more welcoming?**

You can partner with organizations to make inclusion more explicit. For example, Nashville hosts a monthly jam that is affiliated with Bluegrass Pride, to help make clear that the jam is for everyone and all are welcome. Be particular about the language you use in promoting jams, to help show that not just all levels of musicianship, but also all participants, are invited to join in the practice. At the festival/programming level, make sure that concert series and gatherings promote diversity in terms of orientation as well as identity of all sorts (gender, race, age, etc.).

### **What can individuals do to support LGBTQ+ musicians in bluegrass?**

Support organizations and non-profits like Bluegrass Pride; there are countless local organizations that work on LGBTQ+ advocacy as well. (in Austin, for example, the Austin Pride Foundation -ed.) Buy merch from musicians in this community. A T-shirt goes a long way; wearing that T-shirt at a festival goes even further. Volunteer for events to support advocacy. There are lots of ways that you can make a difference.

*Pride month just passed, but the City of Austin has its **Pride Parade on Saturday, August 23rd**. It'll be hot out there, but hey we'd love to see the Bluegrass community represent! - Jon*

---

## **ACROSS THE WAY**

*CTBA Member-Band Feature*

**Across The Way** emerged from the CTBA Bluegrass community... born out of jam circles and open mic nights. The band brings together duo partners **Roam** and **Loren Gunn** with their musical friends **Jerry Hill**, **Ken Marut**, and CTBA veteran **Eddie Collins**, creating a sound that is both contemporary and rooted in tradition.



From lonesome traditional Bluegrass and Gospel to classic Country, Swing,

and Mashgrass, *Across The Way* explores a wide range of Roots music through their passion for vocal harmonies and driving instrumentation. Y'all come and say hi sometime. We'd love to sing one for ya. Keep up with music and shows at [AcrossTheWayMusic.com](https://www.acrossthewaymusic.com) or on Instagram at [@AcrossTheWayMusic](https://www.instagram.com/acrossthewaymusic)

---

## SPINNING WAX

*By Simon Waxman, CTBA Vice-President*

The national bluegrass scene got a major infusion from Texas in the latter part of 1985. It didn't happen like you might expect, though. There wasn't any breakout local band. (Sorry to the Austin Lounge Lizards.) In fact, something like the opposite happened. All at once and practically overnight, the state's most forward-leaning bluegrass outfit dissolved. And then, what had been Arlington, TX-based **Southern Connection** was reborn as a new edition of the Bristol, TN-based **Quicksilver**, helmed by Doyle Lawson. The biggest act in bluegrass without Bill Monroe's name on it.

Southern Connection marked a leap forward for two key talents, Russell "Sing It Loud" Moore, of Pasadena, Texas, and banjo champ Scott Vestal, from Duncan, Oklahoma. Eventually, with Illrd Tyme Out, Moore joined the pantheon of bluegrass's brightest vocal stars, and Vestal ranks as one of a handful of truly influential banjo innovators. But first Vestal had a gig with a two-family band, Pickin' Tymes, which also featured his brother Curtis on bass and future Steel Drivers fiddler Tammy Rogers alongside both of her parents. From there, and straight out of high school, Scott Vestal began a stint with Larry Sparks. The apparently hard-scrabble venture didn't last. In 1981 Vestal rejoined Pickin' Tymes, which now included Moore, singing and playing mandolin and making a mental note to not forget the neologism "tyme." At the same moment, Moore was working with a late iteration of the venerable Bluegrass Ramblers of Texas, on whose 1982 release *Travelin' Man* the then-nineteen-year-old is clearly the leading man.

Heavily inspired by the cutting-edge sound they were hearing from their future boss Doyle Lawson, the trio of Moore and Curtis and Scott Vestal gathered in Arlington and formed Southern Connection. Soon, guitarist Marc Keller joined the band.

Fully formed, Southern Connection epitomized the 1980s bluegrass sound. Their performance is unhurried yet forward-leaning, with sparkling instrumentals and clean, powerful singing, carried along by intricate vocal arrangements, surprising-but-in-the-pocket chord progressions, and pulsing electric bass. There is a whiff of luxury surrounding this music. It feels opulent in a way that bluegrass seldom did before the '80s.

Check out this TV clip of Southern performing "Raining in LA," by Wes Golding (Boone Creek, Shenandoah Cutups).



Vestal is relentlessly crisp, even as he is experimenting with the beginnings of a more flamboyant sound. And Moore shows off mandolin chops that would go silent as his career progressed and he settled into a new role as a top-dollar pair of lungs with a guitar strapped to the front. (Later, “Raining in LA” was a hit for Moore and Illrd Tyme Out.) Keller’s playing runs farthest from the bluegrass mainstream, and Vestal would credit the guitarist for inspiring his own interest in incorporating elements of jazz on the banjo. What we’ve got on this recording is pure entertainment, right down to an awkwardly rakish audience-directed wink from Moore, a gesture so unconvincing that it can only have been practiced. Elsewhere on the same TV program, the band breaks out a stout, brief instrumental, “Jesse James,” which sees Vestal delivering creative ideas within the Scruggs format.

Above all, Southern Connection could sing. These live recordings are rough, but the vocal arrangements and delivery on “In the Heat of the Night” and “Helplessly Hoping” are clearly the real thing. It’s no wonder Doyle was impressed when he heard the fellas on stage while passing through Cleveland, Texas, round about 1984.

That same year, the group released its lone, self-titled, album. *Southern Connection* is stellar throughout. There is definitive '80s stuff here, like “Going Home” and “Your Selfish Heart.” “He Lifted Me” and “The end of the Road” move the tingle meter with innovative, richly layered gospel harmonies. The hobo number “Georgia Bound” benefits from a subtly unconventional arrangement, and the band asymptotically approaches funkiness with their rendition of Connie Smith’s “If It Ain’t Love.” “I Don’t Worry About You Anymore” sees the group at the apex of its energy and abilities. Moore, on lead vocals, absolutely goes for it.



Summer 1985, L-R Scott Vestal, Doyle, Russell Moore & Curtis Vestal

A couple of warhorses, “I’m Just Waiting for You to Call Me Darling” and “Let’s Part the Best of Friends,” sound just fine but don’t gain much from Southern Connection’s panache. And the cover of Randy Vanwarmer’s “Just When I Needed You Most” is, I imagine, polarizing. I happen to like the piece, notable for Vestal’s delicate banjo work. A phrase you don’t hear every day: delicate banjo.

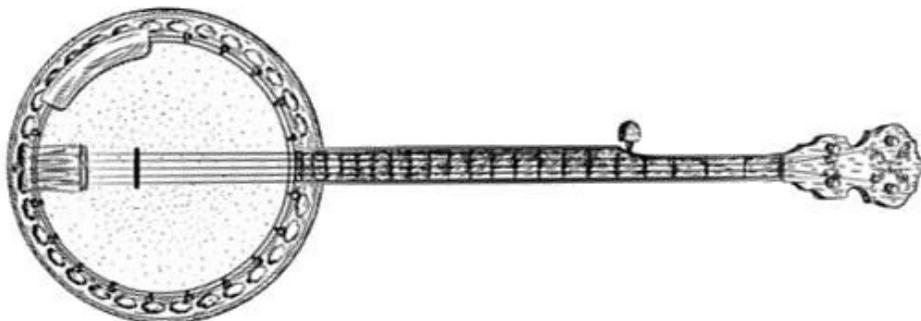
With the album cut and pressed, Southern Connection had made its contribution to bluegrass evolution. And that was that. In mid-1985, the boys drove east with an invitation to play Lawson’s festival in Denton, North Carolina. They decided to stay put, resettling in Asheville, closer to the heart of the industry. Later that year, when the members of Quicksilver departed to form their own group, Southern Connection was ready to change its name. Russel Moore and Scott Vestal, along with brother Curtis, huddled under Lawson’s wing. They flew high from there.

You can hear [Southern Connection \(1984\)](#) in full on YouTube.

---

## CTBA MEMBER-BANDS

The CTBA is proud to have the following [bands](#) as members and wholeheartedly recommend them for all of your Central Texas bluegrass needs!



[Across the Way](#)  
[Bird Calls](#)  
[Black Diamond](#)

[Livermore](#)  
[Long Prairie](#)  
[Lost Patterns](#)

[Bobby Giles & Texas Gales](#)  
[Dalton Harper Band](#)  
[Four Fights Per Pint](#)  
[The Greenlawn Rangers](#)  
[Gus Miller & The Buzz Killers](#)  
[The Hillsiders](#)  
[Hot Pickin 57s](#)

[The McKinleys](#)  
[MoPac Traffic Jams](#)  
[Randy Collier & Grassland](#)  
[The Sieker Band](#)  
[Strawberry Flats](#)  
[Wayside Bluegrass](#)

If your band is interested in becoming a CTBA member, please visit [CentralTexasBluegrass.org/Join](http://CentralTexasBluegrass.org/Join) or contact us at [CTBA@CentralTexasBluegrass.org](mailto:CTBA@CentralTexasBluegrass.org) to learn more.

---

## CTBA BUSINESS MEMBERS

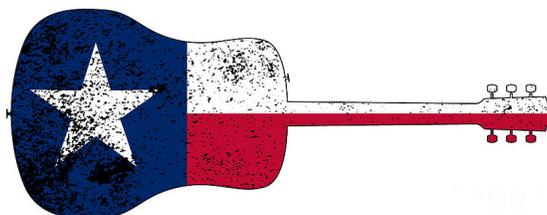
The CTBA is proud to have the following **businesses** as members, please consider supporting them as they support Bluegrass in Central Texas!



[Barton Springs Mill](#)  
[Batch Craft Beer & Kolaches](#)  
[Cabin 10](#)  
[Country Guitar Online](#)

[Old Settlers Music Fest](#)  
[Shades of Bluegrass](#)  
[St. Elmo Brewing Co.](#)  
[Vista Brewing](#)

If you and your business are interested in becoming a part of the CTBA, please head on over to [CentralTexasBluegrass.org/Join](http://CentralTexasBluegrass.org/Join) or reach out at [CTBA@CentralTexasBluegrass.org](mailto:CTBA@CentralTexasBluegrass.org).



---

Central Texas Bluegrass | P.O. Box 9816 | Austin, TX 78766-0816 US

[Unsubscribe](#) | [Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)



Try email marketing for free today!