**EDUCATION – AGM REPORT – 2018**

**To fulfill our Mandate to support blues artists; provide education and encourage community interaction we have continued to organize the Youth Blues Camp and recently a Workshop (Woodshed Weekend). As part of our 2017 Strategic Plan it was decided that the Blues Camp; Clinics and Weekend Woodsheds would fall under a GRBS Board Education Sub-committee. This committee is comprised of Dennis Coumo; Don Featherstone; Neil Tarswell; Janet McKerron Wendell and George White.**

**GRAND RIVER BLUES CAMP**

Last year, 2017, was a major milestone for the Grand River Blues Camp.  We held our 10th edition of Blues Camp and we can look back at 2017 as another success. This milestone camp was held for the first time at a secondary school facility, Kitchener-Waterloo Collegiate. We occupied 7 classrooms, including a large double room that served as our main performance room and lunchroom. Having the camp on one floor, in one wing of the school, with easily accessible washrooms and only one entrance, made supervision much simpler and we were generally very satisfied with this venue.

An important part of the mission of the Grand River Blues Society is to support our local musicians and their efforts in continuing to provide quality live music for our enjoyment.  Last year we provided 4 days of paid work for 11 local musicians from the blues scene in the region.  We had only one change to our lineup of instructors, and once again they guided this large and talented group of young people to another great performance.

Cherly Lescom, Chris Latta, John McKinley, John Lee, Matt Weidinger, Mike McDonald, Colin White, Don Featherstone, Andy Gingerich and Jay Burr returned as instructors. We added local legend Chuckie Zehr to our lineup and she proved to be a perfect fit with our other hard working instructors.  These fine musicians continued the tradition of providing excellent instruction and leadership and have become mentors to many of our campers, inspiring them to pursue their love of music.

Continuing another tradition of including intern instructors we were blessed with four previous campers who offered to assist us during the week. Adam Blackburn, Matt Lemoges, Spencer MacKenzie and Caleb Degroot-Magetti were our returning interns, all of whom have continued study music at the post-secondary level and/or pursue a career in music. Bringing back former Campers who are continuing to pursue music as a career is another way that the Camp helps to develop our local musicians.

We pride ourselves on making the Grand River Blues Camp both accessible and affordable. For the most part, this is made possible due to the generous donations of our sponsors. These benefactors help with lunches, equipment and in some cases even support for individual campers to attend. In 2017 our sponsors included:

Sherwood

Try-City Music (David Spruce)

The Lancaster Smokehouse

Central Ontario Musicians Association

Bobby O'Briens

Garry Attack Financial

Waterloo Region District School Board

Gino's Pizza

Kitchener Blues Festival

While our registration fee of $175 for a four day, music camp is considered quite affordable, we have had a number of anonymous benefactors step forward to offer financial assistance to any youngster who may not be able to afford to attend. Any members who know of any young people who may need assistance, should contact us at **info@grandriverblues.org**. Also let us know if you would be willing to be an anonymous benefactor.

Our campers continue to have the benefit of some youth oriented jams again this past year.  In its fourth year, our friends at the Lancaster Smokehouse (Chris Corigan) have run a youth-friendly jam hosted by long time Blues Camp instructor John McKinley.  Rhapsody Barrel Bar has a jam that is available to Campers, hosted by another long-time instructor John Lee. As well, the Churchill Arms has been running youth-friendly jams attended by many of our Blues Campers.

As always we need to brag about our successes. This year we had a band made up entirely of Blues Campers participate in the Youth Showcase at the International Blues Challenge in Memphis. Vintage Flight, which also won the Youth Legacy Contest held by the Kitchener Blues Festival represented the Grand River Blues Society in Memphis in January. Our Blues Camp Video continues to drum up interest in our Camp from around North America and showcase our efforts in educating youth about the Blues. Members of a Youth Showcase band from Massachusetts have registered for Blues Camp this year.

The Grand River Blues Society continues to pursue its mission to keep the blues alive, and the Grand River Blues Camp is about paying forward and ensuring that the musicians of tomorrow have a strong foundation, steeped in the blues.  We have had 10 successful years of Grand River Blues Camp and we hope to see you all out on August 10th, at the BIA Stage of the Kitchener Blues Festival, to cheer on our 11th Grand River Blues Camp Showcase for 2018.

**BLUES CLINICS**

We have continued to organize evening Blues Clinics in partnership with The Guitar Corner. This past year Mike Elliott (Tone on a Budget); Dan Walsh (Slide Guitar); Jonathan Knight (Song Writing) and McKenzie Jordan (Southern Rock) each provided approximately two hours of incredible musical instruction. As always all money collected, (GRBS members were given a $5.00 rebate), was given to the artists. The Guitar Corner provided additional incentives for the artists.

In partnership with Warmington’s Bistro, Brantford, Harp Dog Brown (Harmonica) presented a free harmonica workshop.

Advertising/promotional material for the clinics included posters and postcards. They were distributed/posted in Guelph, Brantford and Kitchener/Waterloo/Cambridge. Feedback for these events has been very positive.

**WOODSHED WEEKENDS #1 – ELECTRIC GUITAR**

In response to the many requests by adults for an “Adult Camp” fashioned on the summer “Kids Camp”, we organized a Woodshed Weekend. Woodshed Weekend #1 – Electric Guitar, was held on April 27-29/18 in partnership with The Lancaster Smokehouse. Thanks to Steamwhistle Brewery for the donated beverages and The Guitar Corner for door prizes. Instructors for the Woodshed included, John McKinley (Musical Director); Darryl Romph; Paul Fernandez and Chris Corrigan with Darius McKinley and Peter Grimmer providing the rhythm section as the “jam band”. The instructors led participants through a variety of sessions: individual instruction; breakout sessions; discussion and group instruction. Rob Fowler from Classic Amps gave a demonstration of various amps and tone.

After review of similar “camps” as well as market conditions, a participant fee of $350.00 was set. We were anticipating that any funds raised over the costs for operating the camp could be used to offset the costs of the Blues Camp and/or for a possible scholarship for  “Camp Youth” who are going on to higher musical education. This was a $3,150.00 venture with a return of $2,935.00 so there was a short-fall of $215.00.

Feedback from participants was very good, all noting that they would encourage a friend to sign up for another one if offered or return again themselves. As one participant noted, “…I would have had to attend at least 20 jams to learn what I got this weekend…”. Currently, we are in the process of reviewing ways to strengthen participation.

Respectfully submitted,

Dennis Cuomo and Neil Tarswell – Directors GRBS