



## Long Days, Short Years

By Beth Ann Edwards

A friend once described her life as “long days, short years.” As my two-year term as Area 8 Chair winds up, this is a good description of my tenure. Two years! The first one-and-a-half years were spent blissfully unaware of what was to come. I love to plan and anticipate, and I’m certain that our Area 8 Festival was on track to be a rousing success. The first two months of quarantine were spent cancelling our Festival, and the last few months have been spent facing our new reality of living with COVID-19. I am heartened when I hear of bell choirs moving forward: creative rehearsals, sharing ideas for safety procedures, and exploring new music that fits these times. We are resilient, and our love of the instrument will endure.

With generous support and help from the Area 8 Board and all of the members, we can claim some pretty awesome accomplishments:

- The website host was changed over to Handbell Musicians of America, and a new design was implemented.
- Quavers, our bi-monthly newsletter, was redesigned and re-focused.
- Area 8 served as the local liaison for HMA National Seminar in St. Louis, Missouri, supplying equipment and volunteers for the four-day event.
- All board positions were filled with members who are eager to work together and carry out Area 8 activities.
- All five states continued to have local and state-wide events that were well-attended (before March 15, that is!).
- We all “made new friends and kept the old” through our handbell relationships.

Sharon Schmidt, our incoming Area 8 Chair, will run the Area confidently and wisely. Sharon has the knowledge and experience to move us forward, and I’m blessed to call her my friend. When she contacts you about Area 8 activities, get ready to say “yes” because you will not want to miss out on anything she has planned for us.

### What's Inside

- 2 Executive Committee Members
- 4 National Leadership Training
- 5 Creative Solutions
- 7 Cancelled, But Not Really
- 8 Kansas Looks Back
- 9 We're All in This Together
- 10 What Does It Mean To Be a Handbell Director?
- 11 Upcoming A8 Events

# Executive Committee Members

Congratulations to our newly elected Executive Committee Members!

The following candidates have been elected to the Area 8 Executive Committee. For the next two years, they will join Sharon Schmidt, who will serve as Chair, and Beth Ann Edwards, who will serve as Past Chair. Chris Peck, our newly elected Chair-Elect, will continue on the board as Chair in 2022 and Past Chair in 2024.

## Chris Peck - Chair-Elect

Chris Peck was introduced to handbells during his middle school / high school years at King of Kings Lutheran Church in Gardner, Kansas, with Kipp Willnauer. Chris went on to earn his Bachelor of Arts from Bethany College (Lindsborg, KS) where he had the opportunity to learn from educator, Bethany alum, and Malmark representative, Eunice Tarum. His senior recital included handbells, both as a soloist and a composer.

Chris went on to teach band and choir in public schools in Kansas and Iowa for several years. He has been involved with church music for the past twenty-plus years in various churches throughout Kansas, Iowa, and Nebraska. For the past five years, he has served as Director of Choir and Bell Choirs at Trinity Lutheran Church in north Omaha, Nebraska. Chris is also the Choir / Chime Choir Director at Eastmont Towers, a retirement community in Lincoln, Nebraska. Chimes have been a recent addition to the activities available at Eastmont while he has been involved there.

Chris rang for several years in the Omaha area bell choir *River City Ringers*, under the direction of Joyce Miller, and is currently ringing in the Lincoln area bell choir *Bell-issimo*, under the direction of Nancy Youngman. Chris is an accomplished handbell composer / arranger of about 10-12 published handbell pieces.

Chris has served Area 8 and the general handbell world in various capacities. In the early 1990s, he worked behind the scenes at a few Area 8 summer conferences helping shuffle equipment around to various rooms and helping with whatever was necessary. He also served a term as the Area 8 Education (or Chime?) chair. In the later 1990s, he served a term as Iowa's chair. He also spent a couple summers as one of the directors of Intergenerational Handbell Camp, in Parkville, Missouri.

When Chris is not directing bells or choir, or driving a school bus for Lincoln Schools, Chris is training for his next marathon. He is currently training for his first 50-miler, in October.

Chris is married to his wife, Melissa, and lives in Lincoln, Nebraska (Go Big Red!), where they enjoy their small family of rescued cats and dogs.





## Sara Washington - Secretary

Sara Washington started her handbell ringing career at First UMC in Manhattan, KS in 1975 and directing at First Baptist in Arlington, TX in 1991. She has been selected for many advanced and auditioned choirs at HMA sponsored events, for the Solo and Ensemble Dream Team, rang at Bay View Week of Handbells, and has rung in and directed choirs across 8 states. Sara helped start several community choirs: *The Rhapsody Ringers* of Manhattan, KS (1978), *Tulsa Festival Ringers* (1991) *Kansas City Handbells* (1997) and *Rezound! Handbell Ensemble* of Kansas City (2001), has served two terms as Secretary for Area 8 Handbell Musicians of America, and over the years has directed and taught at festivals, workshops and camps. Wanting a challenge while living in Atlanta, GA she rang with three advanced choirs: *Geneva Ringers* at Central Presbyterian Church, *The Atlanta Concert Ringers* and *Golden Bells* of Atlanta, and subbed at many churches throughout the city. Sara and her husband Syl recently moved back to Kansas City to be closer to her huge family (9 sibs + 4 steps and their families). She enjoys family gatherings, biking, walking, baking, sewing, reading and training her new pound puppy, Sisko.



## Lori Fenton - Treasurer

Lori Fenton began ringing bells 35 years ago in Sioux City, Iowa. For the last 26 years she has lived in Des Moines, Iowa, where she currently rings with the *Des Moines Concert Handbells*, of which she is a founding member. She has served Area 8 previously as Iowa Chair and currently serves as Area Treasurer. She has participated in several national ringing events over the past 15+ years including the Bay View Week of Handbells, Distinctly Bronze East and West and Virtuoso, an advanced ringing event sponsored by the *Raleigh Ringers*. She toured Italy with *Desert Bells* and attended the International Symposium in Vancouver in 2016.

Lori is also an accomplished vocalist and sings with numerous groups in Des Moines including the *Des Moines Vocal Arts Ensemble*, *Des Moines Community Orchestra* and her church choir, where she serves as the Alto section leader.

Lori's board experience includes currently serving as the Vice President for the *Des Moines Concert Handbells*, Treasurer (and Past President) for *Des Moines Vocal Arts Ensemble* and Vice Chair for the Board of Music and Fine Arts at her church.

Lori earned a BA in Accounting from Buena Vista College and has spent 26 years working in the life insurance industry. Outside of work and music, Lori enjoys traveling, all things Disney, listening to podcasts and being a cat mom.

# National Leadership Training

By Beth Ann Edwards

## Keep Your Handbell Program Strong

Keep these questions in front of you this next year and see if you need to make improvements in your program.

1. What's going on in your choirs, program, and churches that's good?
2. How are you engaging your ringers, families, congregations, and audiences during this time of pandemic?
3. How are you utilizing social media to stay in contact?
4. What are you planning to do once things open up?

On Saturday, August 8, over 70 officers and board members from all 12 areas in Handbell Musicians of America met online with Interim Executive Director Ed Rollins and Board members to check in and share what's going on in each Area. (Area 8 was well-represented with about 10 members in attendance.) The Leadership meeting historically has taken place during the National Seminar, but because of the move to an online seminar this year, we were not able to meet face-to-face.

Each Area director's report was focused on the following four questions:

1. What's going on in your areas (or choirs, program, churches) that's good?
2. How are you engaging your board and area members (or ringers, families, congregations, audiences) during this time of pandemic?
3. How are you utilizing social media to stay in contact?
4. What are you planning to do once things open up?

The reports and comments that were shared were overwhelmingly positive. During this time of uncertainty and looking to the future, ringing and music continue to be a priority. Directors continue to find ways for the bells to keep ringing: social distancing, music with fewer bell changes, smaller ensembles, virtual choirs, and more! I challenge all of you to adapt the questions to your handbell choir or program, and keep the list in front of you throughout the next year or so. Use them as goals to make sure we stay in touch and retain our flexibility for programming and team-building. Examine the list from time to time and see which area might need some attention, and add any questions that are specific to your choirs and program.

During this next year, staying in touch is more important than ever. We are created to be social beings, and relationships, especially within music ensembles, are what feed us. Healthy relationships will strengthen a handbell choir, even when you're not together in the "old" way. Embrace the new, and adapt your best practices to fit our current life situation. I want to hear what's going on with all of you. Contact me any time ([chair.area8@handbellmusicians.org](mailto:chair.area8@handbellmusicians.org)), and feel free to post on the Area 8 Facebook page any happenings or news to report about your choirs or program. <https://www.facebook.com/Area8Handbells>

Stay safe and healthy, and keep hoping for the best!



Kendall Ladd

**Central/Southern Illinois State Chair**

Kendall Ladd

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# Creative Solutions:

## Reimagining Your Concert Style for the Holidays

By Kendall Ladd

It's that time of year again...or usually it would be. Time to start thinking about your holiday season repertoire and concert. Maybe this year you are looking to change things around and try something new. Even if your concert season is being postponed or is different than what you are used to, it's never too early to start reimagining your concert style. Whether you are looking for a complete upheaval of what you traditionally do, or are just looking for a few creative changes, check out some ideas below.

### 1. Decorations/Props

These can be over the top or very simplistic depending on your repertoire. If you are looking for more general decorations or props, consider hanging small candy canes or stockings from your music binders or stands. You can also use different lighting techniques to help make your setup more festive, including string lights that are white or red and green. How about incorporating props into specific songs, such as using large, white snowflakes for White Christmas.

### 2. Costumes

And no, I don't mean 15 magical costume changes during or in-between each of your songs with stunning surprises like Taylor Swift does during her concerts. Fun costumes can be an exciting way to begin or end your concert. These can be general, like festive gloves, hats, or shirts that can be quickly and easily put on over your normal concert attire. The costumes can also be specific to one of the songs you are playing, such as headband antlers or fake red noses for Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer or Santa hats for Here Comes Santa Claus. I have found these to be particularly fun if they are incorporated into a piece that is challenging for your ringers. It can be a good way to help them relax before the piece starts.

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*It (costumes) can be a good way to help them relax before the piece starts.*

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### 3. Choreography

To some, the word "choreography" can be daunting since it so often suggests large dance numbers or movements that require every ringer in the choir. In this case, I think it can be used more sparsely with just a section of the choir or a few ringers if it fits the piece. Choreography doesn't even need to be specific to the song you are ringing, it could simply be swaying back and forth in unison during one section of a single piece. It could also be more complex, with ringers switching positions in the middle of a song.

# Area 8 Board

## CHAIR

Beth Ann Edwards

## CHAIR-ELECT

Sharon Schmidt

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Lori Fenton

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Kirsten Hendrickson

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Patrick Gagnon

## KANSAS CHAIR

Kipp Willnauer

## MISSOURI CHAIR

Cheri Leigh

## NEBRASKA CHAIR

Nancy Youngman

Please visit the Area 8 website for contact information and bios.

## 4. Introductions

It is always beneficial to give some background on the piece of music you are about to ring. However, if you find yourself just listing off facts about each song, maybe try switching it up a bit. You could shout out questions to the audience to see if they can guess the original artist or a fun fact about the song's history. Maybe read off commonly misheard lyrics of the song, if they are suitable to the piece of music and your audience, of course.

This is by no means a comprehensive list, and these suggestions may not be suitable for every choir or venue.

Have other ideas we missed? Feel free to share them on any of our Facebook pages and let us know!

Handbell Musicians of America – Area 8

Illinois Handbell Musicians of America

Iowa Handbell Musicians of America

Kansas Handbell Musicians of America

Handbell Musicians of America - Area 8 – Missouri

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# Cancelled, But Not Really

By Patrick Gagnon, Iowa Chair

Hello, friends, and thank you for reading. We have made the difficult decision to postpone our planned fall 2020 handbell events in Des Moines until 2021. Our planned Friday, October 9 "Beer, Wine, and Bells" reading session will be held at 6:00 p.m. on Friday, October 8, 2021, still at First Unitarian Church in Des Moines with Des Moines Concert Handbells and clinician Brenda Austin. Beer, wine, other beverages and heavy hors d'oeuvres will be provided by DMCH.

Also, our planned Saturday, October 10, 2020 Mid-Iowa Handbell Festival will be held on Saturday, October 9, 2021 from 9 am - 3 pm at Windsor Heights Lutheran Church, also with clinician Brenda Austin.

However, we WILL be gathering together this fall on the date of our planned 10/10/2020 event via Zoom! Please join in at 9:00 a.m. Central Time with your 100 best Iowa handbell friends, and our wonderful clinician, Brenda Austin, conductor of the Detroit Handbell Ensemble, and handbell editor at Hope/Agape publications.

We will be able to listen to recordings of the planned repertoire, visit with our friends and neighbors, and more importantly, meet with Brenda and pick her brain about the repertoire for the 2021 festival, about teaching at an online festival, and about our hopes for life after the pandemic allows us to be physically present once more.

I will post an invitation closer to the event on the Iowa Facebook Page, but if you want to have a direct link, email me at [ia.area8@handbellmusicians.org](mailto:ia.area8@handbellmusicians.org). If you attended our Zoom call earlier this summer, it will be the same link.

I wish you all health, safety, and sanity in your fall handbell activities.



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Cat Walker



Kipp Willnauer

**Kansas State Chair**

Kipp Willnauer

**Treasurer**

Karla Denton

**Secretary**

OPEN - Contact:

Kipp Willnauer

**Chimes**

Shirley Myers

**Congratulations** to Kipp Willnauer, who is retiring from the Area 8 Board. He has served the Area in many capacities, including Area 8 Chair. We wish him well!

Kipp's retirement provides a wonderful opportunity for a Kansas handbell musician to take the reins. If you, or someone you know, would like to serve Kansas on the Area 8 Board, please contact Sharon Schmidt (chairelect.area8@handbellmusicians.org)

# Kansas Looks Back...

## On Ringing Events and Concerts



Heartland Ringers



Lawrence Community Handbells



Autumn Leaves Workshop  
Overland Park



Resonate 2019



Ring in the Spring 2020



Ring in the Spring 2019



Handchime Festival



Prairie Bronze





**Missouri State Chair**

Cheri Leigh

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Suanne Comfort

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Suanne Comfort

**Membership**

Sherry Boland

**Chime Chair**

Christie White

# *We're All in This Together*

By Cheri Leigh, Missouri Chair

Do you remember when this whole pandemic started and nearly everyone in the news and broadcasting the news kept saying "We're all in this together"? I hardly hear it anymore and yet it seems even more true.

As I listened to the reports of all twelve of the Area chairs I heard the same comments: Our Area had festivals and other events planned, they were all postponed, and we're figuring out how to present events virtually. Doesn't that sound familiar to our Area 8 also?

Where this has been tried, there has been some success. Some groups are meeting in person where masks and plenty of space can be used. Some groups are meeting over Zoom. And some areas are holding events where the classes can be taught virtually. This works because we all want to be ringing and learning and because handbell musicians are creative.

Please send us your ideas for staying in good handbell shape and keeping up the ringing energy. Since "We're All in This Together," we need your creativity to keep going until we can all ring again together. What has worked for you?

*Presented by The Raleigh Ringers*

# VIRTUOSO

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Conductor: Dr. William Payn    June 3-6, 2021    Raleigh, NC  
Applications Now Being Accepted    [www.rr.org/events/virtuoso](http://www.rr.org/events/virtuoso)

# *What Does It Mean To Be a Handbell Director?*

By Nancy Youngman, Nebraska Chair

With the pandemic and so much of our bell lives on hold for now, I pulled out an article I wrote in 1996, during my first go round as Nebraska's State Chair. Twenty-four years later, it is still appropriate. I have added and revised, but the basics are still there. Being a director is quite a responsibility---many hours of recruiting and preparing ringers, choosing challenging and appropriate music to keep the interest of both the ringers and the congregation, and constantly being able to relate to the ringers as they come to play with the challenges of their own day weighing on them.

So—I ask—what DOES it mean to be a handbell director?

- Taking down and setting up tables hundreds of times a year
- Spending hours listening to demos trying to pick out just the right music
- Worn out gloves----why is it always the right hand glove?
- Trying to find the perfect spot to ring in a church that was built before handbell choirs were used regularly
- Frantically trying to figure out what to do with a vacant spot when someone is sick at the last minute
- Neck and back pain from lugging around so much “stuff”
- Being called “mom” by an entire teen bell choir, plus “bell mommy” by some adults!
- Sharing life experiences with a close-knit group of people
- Meeting people from all over the world at workshops and festivals
- Improving your own musical skills so you can play what they play
- Being one of the first called when a ringer is hospitalized or ill
- Having many special people praying for you when you are ill or hospitalized
- Preparing a bell choir for the wedding of a ringer
- Being asked to play for the funeral of a dear ringer
- Most important, being the vehicle for a wonderful way to praise God through music!



## **Nebraska State Chair**

Nancy Youngman

## **Secretary**

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6 publications per year,  
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must be submitted by the  
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submit a concert or event for  
inclusion, click here or go to  
the A8 Website, Events page.

## Questions?

Please send all questions and  
comments about this and  
future Quavers publications to  
newslettereditor.area8@  
handbellmusicians.org

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*Find the most  
up-to-date  
calendar and  
details about  
events on the  
A8 website.*

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# Upcoming A8 Events

## September 2020

**Friday, September 25, 2020**

6:30 pm Area 8 Board of Directors Meeting

**Saturday, September 26, 2020**

9:00 am Area 8 Board of Directors Meeting

## October 2020

**Saturday, Oct. 10, 2020**

9:00 am Zoom call with Brenda Austin, clinician for 2021 Mid-Iowa Handbell Festival

## July 2021

**Thursday, July 13, 2021 - Saturday, July 17, 2021**

National Seminar 2021: Phoenix, Arizona

## Handbell Happy Hour

Sponsored by Handbell Musicians of America

Looking for a fun way to help ease the isolation of self-quarantine and social distancing during the COVID-19 pandemic? Join us each Tuesday and Thursday for a casual, virtual chat with your handbell friends.

Happy Hour Times:

Tuesdays – 4:00 P.M. Eastern (1 P.M. Pacific)

Thursdays – 7:00 P.M. Eastern (4 P.M. Pacific)

### Join the Chat

Each chat will be hosted by a member of the national staff or board of directors. Use this time to check in with each other, share ideas for staying musically connected, and discuss your love for all things handbell. No need to pre-register, just follow this link (<https://meetings.ringcentral.com/j/1482015406>) each week.

Sessions will last up to an hour. Have ideas for topics to discuss on these chats? Just email your suggestion to [info@handbellmusicians.org](mailto:info@handbellmusicians.org). We will continue our Handbell Happy Hours as long as they are useful and valuable to our members.

So grab your favorite snack and beverage and join us online!