



Area 8 Chair Signing Off!

by Chris Peck, Area 8 Chair

As Handbell Musicians of America Area 8 Festival 2024 wraps up, it causes me to reflect on how great handbells are and how wonderful handbell people are.

We **CONNECTED** with each other through our common musical art. Friendships were renewed and created.

We **CREATED** music that began in the minds of composers, moved to notes and symbols on paper, and was interpreted by guest conductors Stevie Berryman, Greig Ashurst, and all of you! And the results were wonderful!

We **CELEBRATED** the small wins and the big wins. We learned new skills and concepts at classes. We rang some challenging music together on the ringing floor.

These few days of **CONNECTING**, **CREATING**, and **CELEBRATING** didn't just happen by themselves, though. It's been a two-year process with a very experienced and committed Area 8 Board.

As Area 8 chair, I want to express my thanks to our board for working so tirelessly from Wednesday night through Sunday afternoon. Many on the board have helped with Area 8 Festivals in the past and know what needs to happen, often without asking. Those who are new to the Area 8 board jumped right in with contributions of their own as well. Our local folks, Noah Hartsfield and Nancy Dreier, had the enormous job of securing the loaned equipment and keeping it all organized while in the hotel. They did super! In multiple trips with a U-haul truck, they moved:

- 13 sets of 3-octave bells
- 3 sets of 5-octave bells
- 3 sets of upper 4/5-octave bells
- 4 sets of lower 4/5-octave bells
- 1 set of 5-octave chimes
- 18 extra tables
- LOTS of foam pads

Board members also brought 5 whiteboards, 3 projectors, two sets of speakers, and a printer!

I look forward to this fall when I rotate to past chair, working with Lori and the 2024-2026 Board on future events and helping the Illinois committee as co-chair.

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Area 8 Election Results

Your 2024-2026 Executive Board!

Congratulations to Nancy Blackwell (chair-elect) and Laura Kastens (secretary) on their election to the Area 8 Executive Board. Current treasurer Tami Kofron was re-elected for her second term. You can see bios for these folks [here](#).

In addition to these three, the 2024-2026 board will include Lori Fenton (chair) and Chris Peck (past chair.) The new executive Board will begin their terms on October 1st.

Sharon Schmidt (past chair) and Sara Washington (secretary) are completing their terms. Many thanks to them for their years of service to the Area.

The Executive Board is a subset of the Area 8 Board, which includes one or two appointed representatives from each state, and the appointed positions of Education, Communication, Historian, Membership, Resource Librarian, Registrar, and Chime Loan Coordinator. We are always looking for folks to serve at the state and area level – if you are passionate about handbells, like to work with like-minded bell nuts, and want to connect with and help other handbell musicians, we can find a place for you! Contact chair Chris Peck (chair.area8@handbellmusicians.org) or chair elect Lori Fenton (chairelect.area8@handbellmusicians.org) to chat.



2024-26 Executive Board: Nancy Blackwell, chair-elect; Chris Peck, past chair; Lori Fenton, chair; Laura Kastens, secretary; Tami Kofron, treasurer

Area 8 Board

CHAIR

Chris Peck

CHAIR-ELECT

Lori Fenton

SECRETARY

Sara Washington

TREASURER

Tami Kofron

PAST CHAIR

Sharon Schmidt

COMMUNICATIONS

Amy Knudsen

CHIMES CHAIR

Nancy Youngman

FINANCIAL ADVISOR

Stephen Swanson

MEMBERSHIP

Lori Fenton

RESOURCE LIBRARIAN

Open - Contact Chris Peck

WEB MASTER

Wendi Calkins-Levitt

EDUCATION

Rick Richards

QUAVERS EDITOR

Beth Ann Edwards

HISTORIAN

Laurie Austin

ILLINOIS CHAIR

Beth McFarland

IOWA CHAIR

Dick Crusinberry

KANSAS CO-CHAIRS

Julie Assel, Janelle Flory Schrock

MISSOURI CHAIR

Trey Bures

NEBRASKA CHAIR

Byron Jensen

Festival Scholarship Recipients



Kyle Jackle-Hugh
Scholarship Recipient

This year was my first handbell festival, and it was extremely fun! I took weaving, music theory, techniques for ringers and conductors, and History of Handbells. I learned the most about music theory, but also a lot about the history of handbells. While I knew a lot about ringer techniques and weaving, they were still fun classes to go to!

I rang in Gold division, and mass ringing. My favorite song to play was definitely Eternity's Timepiece. I loved all the jokes both conductors told. This was the first time I really played bass bells, as I'm usually battery or high treble, so I will definitely apply myself to bass bell ringing. Even though I didn't take the class on bass bells, this helped me to get more of a feel for them.

I was really excited to meet all the conductors who had written some of the music we were playing, or I had played in the past; Ron Mallory, Stevie Berryman, and Greig Ashurst, as it's not often that you get that opportunity! I could easily follow along with their conducting and didn't get lost too often. My favorite piece of advice was when Stevie said if you can't pay attention to your markings in your music, you can write a swear word around it. I also liked watching other professional groups that I wouldn't usually see like Rezound! and River City Ringers. I also enjoyed watching my Mom play in BronzeFest.

I'm definitely going to take a lot of this knowledge back to my home group; Bells In Motion, for its next season! Overall, I'm really glad I got to go, and hopefully can come next time!



Rob Morrow
Scholarship Recipient

As a first-time festival attendee, I didn't know what to expect, but my expectations were greatly exceeded. Wow! The massed bell ringing with nearly 200 ringers was incredible. The massed ringers were broken out into beginning and intermediate groups to work on separate music geared to their ringing level, which was also performed at the final concert. The guest conductors challenged all ringers to improve in 8 short sessions while intertwining standup comedy – I've never laughed so much at a bell rehearsal. In between ringing rehearsals, there were dozens of breakout sessions geared to all levels of ringers; if you didn't find at least 3 that would help you improve your ringing, you didn't try very hard. This conference helped all ringers improve and showed the possibility of advanced bell ringing with conference-put-together groups like BronzeFest and Showcase, or city groups like Omaha's River City Ringers or Kansas City's Rezound! Hearing handbell groups play advanced music demonstrates what is possible for your ringing. Hearing handbell groups play Star Wars as Darth Vader challenges the director to a light saber joust, Beach Boys with beach balls batted through the audience, or seeing wild animals roam the stage, opens up your ringing to so many more possibilities. If you have never attended a festival before, I would highly recommend it – you will not go home disappointed.



The Raleigh Ringers

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Area 8 Festival Recap: The Bell Petting Zoo

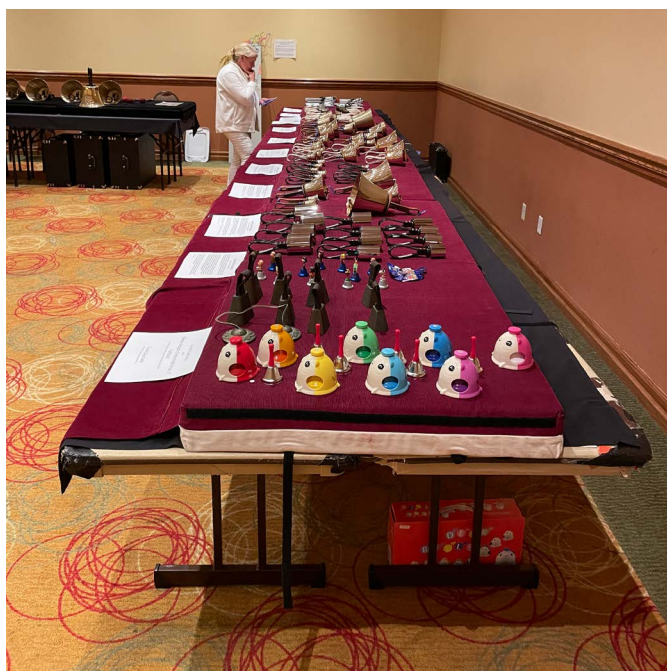
By Laurie Austin, Area 8 Historian

A new feature at the Area 8 festival this year was a bell petting zoo—a chance for festival participants to try out various kinds of bells that were generously loaned for the occasion. The bells ranged from silly to rarely seen. Attendees could handle and ring all the bells, in addition to reading about their history and background.

We are so grateful to have had the following bells available:

- Tuned Cowbells and Peanuts Pepsi Promotional Bells loaned by Wendi Calkins Levitt of Third Bell on the Right
- Silver Melody Bells loaned by Derek Bonczkowski
- Whitechapel, Maas-Rowe, Petit & Fritsen, and the upper 6/7th octave of Schulmerichs loaned by Rezound! Handbell Ensemble
- Tru-Sonic and J. Shaw bells loaned by Linda Ashley
- Suzuki ToneChimes loaned by Community United Methodist Church of Columbia, MO
- Tuned Desk Bells, Malmark bells and chimes of all eras loaned by Laurie and Trent Austin

Thank you so much to our lenders for making this a success!



Highlights From Area 8 Festival Connect, Create, Celebrate

By Beth McFarland, Illinois State Chair

The Area 8 Handbell Festival “Connect; Create; Celebrate”, held in Columbia, Missouri on June 20 to 22, 2024, was an awesome event that brought our five-state area together to learn, ring and celebrate handbells. The following are some of my highlights.

- Firstly, the joy of being surrounded by so many handbell ringers who share the same passion for bells as I do.
- Another highlight was assembling all the choirs and individual ringers for our first mass rehearsal, bringing together almost 190 people to create the sweet sounds of handbells.
- We also introduced our first bell petting zoo. We had the opportunity to see and ring a variety of bells—a wonderful treat for all.
- Listening to the showcase concerts given by River City Ringers and Rezound!. Both ensembles delivered memorable performances, filled with musicianship and emotion and showing what fun can be had with handbells.
- Picking up new ringing tips and techniques from Stevie Barryman and Greg Ashurst to bring home. It is always wonderful to be able to learn a little something new or a new way to approach ringing.
- Meeting new friends and visiting your old friends that you only see every two years. It is always wonderful to make these connections and then celebrate at the area’s festival together.
- And lastly, closing our time together with our final concert. Showcasing all the great work that our ringers had done in rehearsals, the beauty and variety of the music and featuring the collective talent of the handbell community in Area 8.

We now look forward to 2026, when we might gather again and ring.



*Beth McFarland
Illinois State Chair*



Iowa Ringers Attend Festival

Dick Crusinberry, Iowa Chair



2024 Mid-Iowa Handbell Festival with Clinician and Composer Jason Krug



Festival and Massed Ringing

Saturday, October 19, 2024, 8:00 am - 4:00 pm

Beer, Wine & Bells Reading Session and Social Hour

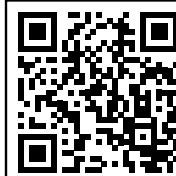
Friday, October 18, 6:00 pm - 8:30 pm

Online Registration is now open!

Use the QR code or go to <https://forms.gle/SS8rvgYehknAwPrU6>. Registration price includes lunch.

For more information, contact Dick Crusinberry at ia.area8@handbellmusicians.org.

This event is sponsored by Handbell Musicians of America.



Kansas Friends Ring Together

Janelle Flory Schrock and Julie Assel, Kansas Co-Chairs



Missouri Ringers

Welcome Area 8 to Columbia, Missouri

Trey Bures, Missouri Chair





Byron Jensen
Nebraska State Chair

The Area 8 Festival was successful and enjoyable because so many contributed their time, muscles, and energy to set the stage

A Committee Member's Perspective

Area 8 Festival: Connect, Create, Celebrate

Byron W. Jensen, Nebraska Chair

It is now the beginning of July 2024. The Area 8 Festival has come and gone. Thousands of conversations and connections were made. My question is: What did you take away from this year's Festival? For me, it was an appreciation for the Area 8 Committee.

This was not my first rodeo for Area 8 Festivals, but it was the first time I had an inside view as a committee member. I have assisted in a half-dozen multi-day conferences in my professional musical life. To martellato another phrase (so to speak), "it takes a village" to organize such events. Admittedly, I don't feel that I contributed much, but as a first-time committee member, I observed some amazing work behind the scenes.

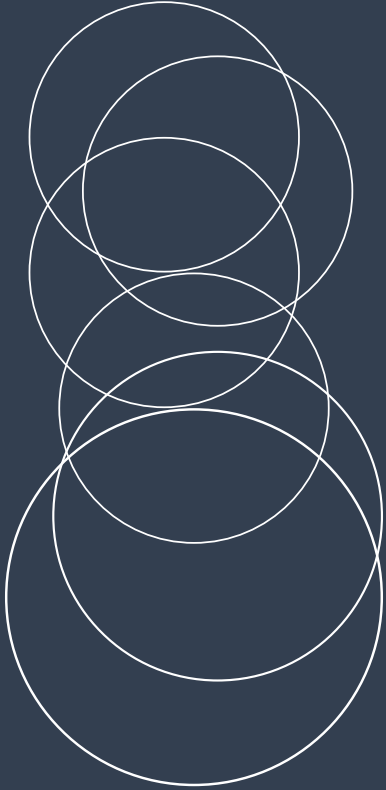
The Area 8 Committee performed like a well-adjusted clapper. This was due to an Executive Committee who started planning months in advance; this included innumerable conversations and visits with representatives at the conference hotel. One of the hardest aspects for any type of conference is negotiating a price that assures a break-even point for Area 8's expenses (with hopes of putting some money into the reserves), and a profit for the hotel. Beyond such financial negotiations is determining what rooms are available, meals, and assigning board members to specific duties. Because of the Executive Committee's preparedness, the rest of us pretty much knew what to do. Two other points:

... a request: Please become involved with your State's handbell committee...

- 1) I thought the Holiday Inn Executive Center was comfortable, and the staff was very accommodating throughout our festival; and
- 2) the Committee used WhatsApp to keep connected. I would estimate we had over 500 text messages during the festival.

Events ranging from classes to reading sessions to special concerts to the silent auction required numerous people to organize. We had a registrar to track classes for participants; a communications guru to keep everyone informed; and an education director to schedule educators and rooms. Quite honestly, I never saw a blip as the festival ran its course over three days. Such is the beauty of pre-planning: once it starts, it runs on its own.

Most may not realize it, but in the background were equipment managers



A Committee Member's Perspective, continued

who picked up borrowed sets and returned them to multiple churches in Columbia and the surrounding area. Some committee members also brought their own instruments and the equipment necessary for classrooms. A potential nightmare looms after a festival ends and borrowed sets (which could include foam, mallets, tables and stands) are kept separate and returned home.

The Area 8 Festival was successful and enjoyable because so many contributed their time, muscles, and energy to set the stage. We also had two excellent clinicians who led with clarity, wit, and musicality; two amazing guest groups; and two vendors. It was fantastic to see teenagers and younger adults participating alongside older adults. It was great to catch up with folks I have not seen for a couple of years or have only seen virtually. And yes, it was nice to get back home.

Now, as July 2024 opens, it is time to plan a new “semester” of church music. I commented in my previous Quavers article that attending handbell festivals or workshops always supplies me with new selections for my groups. I came home with a handful of titles to further review and determine if they will support our pastor’s planned liturgy—or more importantly, are approachable by my groups. As I do this, I will fondly recall my time in Columbia, listening to stories and laughter, and the beautiful sound of handbell music.

Before I conclude, a request: Please become involved with your State’s handbell committee, help grow our numbers, and be supportive of other handbell groups in your nearby community.

Blessings to you all, and best wishes for continued and delightful ringing this fall.





The Handbell Association of Greater St. Louis invites you to join us for these upcoming events.

Details and registration available on our website www.stlbells.org

Jumpstart into Fall and Music Reading Session August 24, 2024 - (9:30-3:30)

Peace Lutheran Church 737 Barracksvue Road St. Louis, MO 63125

Join us for this exciting event to Jumpstart your new ringing year! Bring your entire choir, half your choir or just yourself. The reading session will feature newly published repertoire. Several classes will be offered and there will be numerous gift drawings - the grand prize will be a paid registration for spRingfest 2025 featuring guest clinician Brenda Austin. Handbell 'goodies', new music and HAGSTL garage sale items will be available for purchase.

spRingfest 2025

Join fellow ringers for a one day workshop filled with learning, laughter and new friends. We will be ringing five massed pieces and the day will culminate with a public concert. Please see website for repertoire selections.

Brenda Austin, Clinician

Saturday, February 22, 2025 - (9:00 - 4:00)

First Presbyterian Church, Kirkwood, MO 63122

An additional, optional Friday event will be offered at the same location from 7-9 pm featuring a Read and Ring Technique Session with Brenda Austin.



Illinois Committee

Illinois State Chair

Beth McFarland

Western IL Rep

Don Wood

Secretary

Beth McFarland

Registrar

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Events

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Music Librarian

Beth McFarland

Handbell Services Rep

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Program Coordinator

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Open - please contact

Beth McFarland

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Iowa Committee

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Dick Crusinberry

Treasurer

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Secretary

Donna Sprague

Chimes Chair

Patrick Gagnon

Historian

Christina "Tina"

Elwood Gehrke

Western Representative

Yvonne Johnson

Eastern Representative

Cat Walker

Missouri Committee

Missouri State Chair

Trey Bures

Past Chair

Suanne Comfort

Treasurer

Suanne Comfort

Membership

Sherry Boland

Chime Chair

Christie White

Nebraska Committee

Nebraska State Chair

Byron Jensen

Secretary

Natalie Radcliffe

Treasurer/Registrar

Linda Ashely

Chimes

Nancy Youngman

Scholarship

Janet Chiocchi

Members

Michael Allen

Jessica Kite

Deann Nicolaus

Brian Lew

Angela Wright

Nancy Youngman

Kansas Committee

Julie Assel &

Janelle Flory Schrock

Treasurer

Karla Denton

Secretary

OPEN - Contact

Julie or Janelle

Chimes

Amy Knudsen

Does Your School Qualify?

Area 8 offers a handchime loan program to schools in Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri and Nebraska. *Qualifying schools will receive:*

- 3-octave set of handchimes for one semester (approx. 4 months) with teaching materials
- support network and/or mentor
- one-year membership to Handbell Musicians of America.

To check availability of handchimes for loan or to submit an application, please contact Nancy Youngman, Area 8 Chimes Chair.

To learn more about the Chime Loan Program, visit the [Area 8 website](#).

A video featuring Nancy Youngman describes in detail the Area 8 chime loan program and can be found [here](#).

Upcoming Area 8 Events

September 2024

September 20-21, 2024

7:00 - 9:00 pm Friday and 9 am to 4 pm Saturday

Handbell GatherRING

Trinity Lutheran Church, McPherson, Kansas

September 29, 2024

4:00 pm The Agape Ringers Concert

Christ Lutheran Church of Clarendon Hills, Clarendon Hills, Illinois

October 2024

October 18 & 19, 2024

2024 Mid-Iowa Handbell Festival, Jason Krug, Clinician

Friday, October 18: Beer, Wine, & Bells Reading Session

Central Presbyterian Church, Des Moines, Iowa

Saturday, October 19: Festival & Massed Ringing

Windsor Heights Lutheran Church, Windsor Heights, Iowa

December 2024

December 13, 2024

7:00 pm Des Moines Concert Handbells Concert: Winter Wonderland

Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, Urbandale, Iowa

December 14, 2024

3:00 pm Des Moines Concert Handbells Concert: Winter Wonderland

Plymouth United Church of Christ, Des Moines, Iowa

Upcoming National HMA Events

[Click here for more information](#)

August 12-17, 2024

21st International Handbell

Symposium, Hamamatsu, Japan

October 10-13, 2024

Distinctly Bronze West

January 3-5, 2025

College Ring-In

Lakeland, Florida

July 9-12, 2025

Pinnacle

Wichita, Kansas

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