

Pinnacle Pride

by Lori Fenton, Area 8 Chair

I just returned from Handbell Musicians of America's Pinnacle event in Wichita, KS. The Pinnacle event is similar to the National Seminar with lots of classes, ringing opportunities and shopping, but with more focus on performances (ten total). This year's Pinnacle was a great opportunity for Area 8 to show up and show off!

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- There were 72 registered attendees from Area 8 (several of whom made it into this picture). It was great to talk with so many of you!
- There were TWO ensembles performing in the Showcase (i.e. concert) lineup. Columbia Handbell Ensemble provided the opening showcase on Wednesday evening and Rezound! got us rocking on Saturday morning. Congratulations to both groups!
- Janelle Flory Shrock, Amy Knudsen, and Kathy Leonard served as Local Liaisons, working with the National Planning Committee to ensure all the loaned bells, chimes, foams, mallets and all other miscellaneous equipment was gathered, distributed across several rooms AND returned. Many thanks to them and to the small army of volunteers who assisted them with this huge task.

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Area 8 members attending Pinnacle in Wichita, Kansas, July 2025

Pinnacle Pride, continued

- Where did all of that equipment come from? A lot of it came from 26 groups and individuals across Area 8. These events couldn't happen without the generosity of loaned equipment.
- The National Planning Committee is well represented by Area 8 with Beth Ann Edwards (IA) coordinating Equipment and Volunteers and Kendall Ladd (IL) coordinating Faculty for all the classes.
- Each Area was given a table in the Handbell Commons to promote our Area events and ensembles. Each state in our Area was represented in some way and several people helped me staff the table during peak times (which sometimes meant 7:00 in the morning!) Thank you to Nancy Blackwell, Kristin Kalitowski, John Klopp, Tracy Peterson, Shelly Siemer and Renee Sneitzer.

If you weren't able to attend Pinnacle this year, or even if you did, I hope you'll consider attending National Seminar in Cincinnati, OH, from July 14-18, 2026. It would be great to see Area 8 show up again!



Area 8 Festival: What's New in 2026

- **The Bronze Track** will be completed before the official conference starts, allowing the Bronze ringers to take advantage of class offerings on Friday and Saturday.
- **The Massed Ringing** will be for ALL ringers and we will perform five Level 2-3 pieces. There will be an optional Level 4 piece for those ensembles/ringers who want an extra challenge. We hope to announce the rep by October 1st.
- **Friday evening** will be FREE time! There are several restaurants within a short drive of the venue. We are also contemplating an event at Smash Park for those who might be interested.
- **The Saturday concert** will be late afternoon, which hopefully allows more ringers to travel home on Saturday evening, catch a College World Series game, or just enjoy Omaha. We may also provide an informal reception later in the for anyone sticking around (after everything is put away!)

We will continue to provide more information as we finalize it, so continue to look for updates in *Quavers*, on the Area 8 website and Facebook group, and via Area 8 communications.

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2026 Festival Clinicians

Kathryn Jurado

President-Elect, Handbell Musicians of America



Kathryn Jurado

A musician with over 30 years of performance experience, 20 years of non-profit volunteer work, and lifelong church music ministry service, Kathryn Jurado has quickly gained prominence in the handbell community as a ringer and director. She is starting her first year as the Director of

Handbell Activities at Landon School in

Bethesda, Maryland, where she will lead students from grades 5 through 12. Kathryn also serves as President-Elect on the national board of Handbell Musicians of America, and is the Handbell and Instrumental Editor of Alfred Handbell, a division of Jubilate Music Group.

Born in Puerto Rico, Kathryn holds both a Bachelor and Master of Music degree from the University of South Florida in Tampa. As a freelance oboist and private teacher, she has performed with groups such as Opera Tampa, the Venice Symphony, The Tampa Bay Symphony, The Villages Philharmonic, and performances of La La Land Live, and with Ray Charles, the Irish Tenors, and pop superstars Hanson.

Kathryn served as music director and Vice President of Magic of Bronze, an Orland-based community handbell ensemble, which was a featured performance choir at the 2020 HMA National Seminar, as well as a term as Associate Director of the Suncoast Bronze Ringers community handbell ensemble in the Tampa Bay area. Kathryn has led a handbell ensemble at the University of South Florida, taught music in the Hillsborough County Public Schools for over a decade, served as Province Officer with Sigma Alpha Iota International Music Fraternity, and was the handbell director at Lake Magdalene Church (formerly UMC) in Tampa.

In 2022, Kathryn was the clinician for Reaching for Bronze (now known as Crescendo) in New Bern, North Carolina. She was the handbell clinician for the Florida Chapter of the Fellowship of Worship Artists' Worship Arts Week in Fruitland Park, Florida in 2024 and 2025, HMA Area 4's Bells of the Caribbean in 2024, HMA's 2025 College Ring-In, and the 2025 Utah Spring Ring. Kathryn was a faculty member at HMA's 2025 Pinnacle event in Wichita, Kansas, and is looking forward to leading handbell festivals in Delaware, Montana, and Nebraska in 2026.

Carlos E. Rivera Aponte

Chair-Elect, Area 4



Carlos E. Rivera Aponte

Regarded as one of Puerto Rico's foremost handbell masters, Carlos E. Rivera Aponte has had a fruitful career of more than thirty years as director of various handbell programs in Puerto Rico, Venezuela,

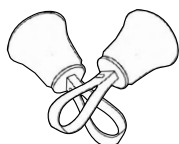
Dominican Republic, Guatemala, and Colombia. Carlos received a Bachelor of Arts with a major in education and music from the University of Puerto Rico. He later received his master's degree in music education with an emphasis on choral music at Florida State University's College of Music in Tallahassee, Florida. He is an active handbell clinician and has inspired many people to become involved in handbell ringing and musicianship. He describes himself as a handbell missionary, in his belief that "there are so many people who have not been able to be in contact with this wonderful instrument; once they do, they'll fall in love with it".

Carlos served two years as an at-large member of HMA National Board and now is the HMA Area 4 Chair-Elect. He currently works as Assistant Dean of Student Affairs, music professor and choral conductor at the University of Puerto Rico-Carolina. He founded San Juan Handbell Ensemble in February 2024.





Festival Venue



The **LaVista Conference Center** is located in the southwest Omaha, NE metro area. It is connected to two different hotels, Embassy Suites by Hilton and Courtyard by Marriot. Rooms will be available at either venue and all hotel guests at either property will be able to take advantage of the free breakfast and complimentary evening reception available at Embassy Suites

Tentative Festival Schedule (subject to change)

Wednesday June 17th	Afternoon/Evening	Bronze Choir Rehearsal
Thursday, June 18th	Morning/Afternoon	Bronze Choir Rehearsal
	Afternoon	Director's Workshop
		Pre-Conference Classes
	Evening	Opening Dinner
		Bronze Choir Concert
Friday June 19th	Morning/Afternoon	Massed Rehearsal
		Classes
		Showcase Concert
	Evening	Free (possible optional activity)
Saturday June 20th	Morning	Massed Rehearsal
		Classes
	Afternoon	Final Rehearsal
		Break
		Final Concert (4:00)
	Evening	Load out, Depart
		Reception





Chris Peck
Illinois State Chair
Area 8 Past Chair

*Want to join a
dedicated,
passionate
group of
musicians?*

Can You Serve?

by Chris Peck, Past Chair

Did you know? Helping others can improve your wellbeing! Doing good for someone else can lower your blood pressure and increase your longevity as well as your happiness.

Have you enjoyed reading the *Quavers* or meeting new handbell friends at an area festival or a state event? Area 8 strives to present these opportunities and so much more to our members and we need your help to continue to do so in the future.

Every two years, members of Area 8 elect officers for the next two years. In 2026, we'll be electing a secretary, a treasurer, and a chair-elect (who will go on to serve as chair for a two-year term). These officers plus the chair and the past-chair make up the Area 8 Executive Committee, which is responsible for the day-to-day operations of Area 8.

Area 8 executive officers share a few traits – they are passionate about handbells, are organized, like to communicate, seek out new ways of doing things, and are willing to be leaders. Do you or someone you know fit the bill? If so, please contact me.

Here is a mini-summary of each officer's responsibilities:

Chair-elect: During the two years as chair-elect, support the chair as needed and learn how the board operates. During the following two years as chair, you're in charge of keeping the area running, including any area-wide events, membership, education initiatives, finances, and communication. That doesn't mean you do everything yourself – delegation is a key to being a successful chair. Finally, you serve as past-chair for two years. At that point, you're supporting the chair and handling responsibilities delegated to you.

Treasurer: In your two-year term, you'll manage the area's finances with the assistance of the Area's financial advisor. That includes handling the banking account as well as reporting the area's financials and ensuring that all state and federal requirements are met.

Secretary: The secretary creates and submits agendas and minutes from all Executive and full board meetings,

If you would consider being on the ballot in 2026, please contact me at pastchair.area8@handbellmusicians.org. Thank you!

Mid-Iowa Handbell Festival

by Dick Crusinberry, Iowa Chair



Nick Hanson

Mark your calendars—we'll be hosting the Mid-Iowa Handbell Festival again this year in Des Moines on October 17 and 18! Our clinician this year will be renowned composer and conductor Nick Hanson.

A native Iowan, Nick has been teaching at The Potomac School in McLean, Virginia, since 2006, where he teaches private handbell lessons and handbell classes to 4th-12th grade students

in six handbell ensembles. He has also served for 25 years as handbell director at Bush Hill Presbyterian Church in Alexandria, Virginia. He has been a faculty member, clinician, and conductor for workshops and events in over 20 states as well as Washington, DC, and internationally as well. He most recently conducted the elite handbell event, Distinctly Bronze East, in March of this year; was co-conductor of the HMA All-Star Choir in 2018, and has led HMA's Distinctly Teen ensemble in 2015 and 2023. He has won numerous awards for teaching, has composed or arranged over 100 pieces of handbell music, and is co-host of the podcast Two Tacos High: A Handbell Podcast.

Beer, Wine, and Bells returns Friday night—a relaxed sight-reading session with Nick, with handbell ringing and light refreshments including beer and wine, as well as a chance to mingle. This Friday night session will be held at Central Presbyterian Church in Des Moines.

The Saturday event will be at Windsor Heights Lutheran Church and will include rehearsals, lunch, and chances to connect with other ringers, culminating in a massed ringing concert Saturday afternoon. The repertoire for the Saturday session is available on our website.

Registration for this event is now open and can be found on the website or by contacting me. All handbell organizations with ringers ages 18+ are welcome to attend either as individuals, partial handbell choirs, or full handbell choirs. Registration fees are \$45/ringer for HMA members and \$55/ringer for non-members and includes lunch and the Friday session. Registration for the Friday session alone is available as well, for \$10/ringer.

Please contact me if you have any questions. We hope to see you in Des Moines this October!



Dick Crusinberry
Iowa State Chair

The festival features a full day of rehearsals, social time, and a massed ringing concert on Saturday, as well as an optional reading session on Friday evening.



Amy Knudsen
Kansas State Chair

*If you read
through the
whole list, you
can see that it
does actually
take a village.*

Local Liaison Highlights and Thank-Yous

Amy Knudsen, Kansas Chair

So I am still coming down from attending Pinnacle in Wichita this past week – what an experience! There were ten fabulous showcases, two given by groups from our area, and many, many classes and reading sessions. And did I forget to mention the vendors?

If you have attended an area conference, attending a national convention is so different. Yes, there are performances, meals and classes, but at National you actually get to attend a reading session of new music directed by some of the composers and arrangers themselves. And if you sign up to ring in a ringing track to work on specific pieces of music, you are again ringing under a composer, or even standing by one. It's kind of hard not to go all 'fan girl,' but they are just like you and me – trying to get the art of handbell ringing more into the mainstream. As Nick Hanson said, "I'm not doing this to make money."

But I would be amiss if I didn't throw out some thank-yous because without them, we wouldn't have been able to accommodate everyone that attended:

To my other two local liaisons – Janelle Flory Schrock and Kathy Leonard – we made a plan, mostly stuck to it, adjusted to side quests and ended with our heads held high.

To the churches and individuals who allowed us to borrow equipment (and there was a lot of equipment needed):

Atonement Lutheran Church and Julie Assel of Overland Park, KS
Bethel College Mennonite Church and Verlene Garber of North Newton, KS
College Hill United Methodist Church and David Bartley of Wichita, KS
Des Moines Concert Handbells and Beth Ann Edwards of Des Moines, IA
Emporia First United Methodist Church and Janine Henry of Emporia, KS
First Baptist Church and Staci Cunningham of Chanute, KS
First Christian Church of McPherson and Emma Perera of McPherson, KS
First Presbyterian Church and Rev. Emily Knoth of Wichita, KS
Hesston College and Russell Adrian of Hesston, KS
Holy Cross Lutheran Church and Ron Mallory of Wichita, KS
First Mennonite Church and Gregg Dick of Halstead, KS
Heartland Ringers and Marilyn Lake of Prairie Village, KS
Hesston Mennonite Church and Ken Rodgers of Hesston, KS
Hesston United Methodist Church and Marge Hamilton of Hesston, KS
Lawrence Community Handbell Choir and Becky Harris of Lawrence, KS

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Local Liaison Highlights and Thank-Yous, continued

McPherson Church of the Brethren and Becky Snell of McPherson, KS
Manhattan First United Methodist Church & Kathy Leonard of Manhattan, KS
Rainbow Mennonite Church and Rosi Kauffman Penner of Kansas City, KS
River City Ringers of Omaha and Nancy Blackwell of Omaha, NE
Rose Hill United Methodist Church and Becky Arheart of Rose Hill, KS
Southminster Presbyterian Church and Joshua Hearn of Prairie Village, KS
Third Bell on the Right and Wendi Calkins Levitt of DeSoto, KS
Trinity Lutheran Church and Donna Swenson of McPherson, KS and
Westminster Presbyterian Church and Tyler Kuder of Topeka, KS.

Some of our own area leaders helped by donating equipment:

Area 8 Chair Lori Fenton of Des Moines, IA
Area 8 Historian Laurie Austin of Kansas City, MO
Kansas State Chair Amy Knudsen of Kansas City, KS
National HMA 'Equipment Wrangler' Beth Ann Edwards of Clive, IA

And a few others from around the US:

Church of the Saviour United Methodist and Joe Galyon of Cincinnati, OH
Handbell Musicians of America and Marie Clyatt-Larson of Cincinnati, OH
Houston Bronze Ensemble and Wilson Van Tine of Houston, TX
Knox Presbyterian Church and Marie Clyatt Larson of Cincinnati, OH
Malmark Bells and Kathy Shaw of Plumsteadville, PA
Peace Lutheran Church and Bradley Anderson of Hurst, TX
Pleasant Ridge Presbyterian Church and Marie Clyatt-Larson of Cincinnati, OH
Schulmerich Bells and Bethan Neely of Green Lane, PA

If you read through the whole list, you can see that it does actually take a village. Thank you so much to everyone who helped, participated, schlepped equipment and attended Pinnacle.

Oh, did I forget to mention that we had at least 72!!! attendees from our area, not including the two performing groups: Columbia Handbell Ensemble under the direction of Ed Rollins and Rezound! under the direction of Janet Carter? And we had two area members serve as faculty: Ron Mallory and Nancy Youngman. The two directors coming to our Area 8 conference in La Vista, NE next summer either led classes or directed the Distinctly Teens: Kathryn Jurado and Carlos E. Rivera Aponte.

I think I mentioned everyone – if I didn't list you, I'm extremely grateful for all the help and guidance. Many hands make light work.

I hope you all have a great rest of your summer and a great start of your ringing season!



Byron Jensen
Nebraska State Chair

Mary Cockett's book offers no answer to my question of bell hatred...

Randomly Rung Thoughts a.k.a. "Breathe"

by Byron W. Jensen, Nebraska Chair

I came across "Bells In Our Lives" by Mary Cockett, which was published in 1973. Fewer than ninety pages, practically every page is adorned with photographs of people, bells, foundries, measurements, and on the opening page of her narrative, a standard rotary dial telephone. (I find humor in those who set their mobile ringtone to something reminiscent of that rotary phone.) Mary's book made me realize how bells used to permeate my life with little awareness of them, and yet I subconsciously recognized what they represented. From bicycles to ice cream trucks to schools to factories to calling one's butler (well, at least in the movies), these bells were emblematic of specific objects or signified schedules. There is a local bakery in my community with a cheerful-sounding bell attached to the front door that feels nostalgic.

I ask, how many of you have encountered people who dislike the sound of bells, especially bells in church? A former professor

of mine was dismayed when the university's administration building, adorned with a bell tower, was modernized with a pre-recorded carillon that played hourly chimes and music. I also know two people who avoid church whenever I have handbells in the service because they dislike the sound. I have sometimes wondered why there is hatred for something so peaceful. As such, I delved into this question in search of possible answers. (Stay with me, I will try to pull this randomness together.)

Mary Cockett's book offers no answer to my question of bell hatred, which, fortunately, has never occupied my brain for very long. I decided to compare handbells to other musical instruments, both in terms of their physical qualities and performance procedures. From my earliest days in the classroom, I taught the elements of music, beginning with rhythm and progressing to melody, harmony, timbre, and form. As for timbre, the characteristic sound of a voice or an instrument, I would tell students that their best friend doesn't identify themselves when they call on the phone because of the unique timbre of their voice. (Of course, modern technology forces me to update this analogy.) In my reflective and sometimes dense academic pursuit of logic, I concluded that timbre and a subsequent lack of reverberation are the primary reasons why some people do not resonate with handbells.

Sixty-two percent of all instruments and 100 percent of all vocalists require air flow from the lungs. (Okay, I fabricated that first percentage because

I ask, how many of you have encountered people who dislike the sound of bells, especially bells in church?

in truth, I have no idea what it might be.) However, there is an element of truth that the air provided by humans through such instruments can make the music seem more emotional and representative of the human experience. (For string players, it is the bow and finger vibrato that makes this connection.)

Handbells, like all percussion instruments, require a deft, reflexive action that, in the hands of skilled players, can be emotive and mesmerizing. The missing component seems to be breathing, and yet all great musicians breathe life into the music. My random digression finally leads me to this: that the musicians playing in any airless ensemble (think string quartet or handbell choir) must breathe together to be in sync both musically and emotionally.

That some would dislike handbells is probably rooted more in the timbre of the instrument, and perhaps in the lack of breathing that brings life into the music. The metallic timbre of handbells is much different than a

flute's tone wafting on the air of its player. Maybe these haters avoided answering an old-fashioned telephone or ringing their bicycle bell. Perhaps they are purists who believe music should only emanate from traditional instruments and voice.

Ultimately, here is what we should all live by: To make the handbells feel, sound, and emote more "humanness," we have to breathe together as an ensemble. Yes, we can manipulate handbell timbre (singing bell, thumb stops, tower swings, etc.), and visually, we can make all of this look stunning. Breathing together, however, has a greater chance of bringing us closer together as ringers, capable of touching the souls of even our staunchest detractors.

Let us endeavor, as Mary Cockett brought out, to make bells a part of everyone's daily lives. We are who we are because handbells fulfill our lives and ambitions to make a musical difference in this world. Keep breathing!

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](#).



Nancy Youngman
Chimes Chair

*This was the
16th handbell
cruise for the
group, and
they definitely
have it down to
a science.*

Alaskan Bell Cruise

by Nancy Youngman

There was just ONE STATE left!! My husband and I had visited 49 states, with only Alaska left on our bucket list. And, then, of course, there is my obsession with bells. Well, in 2024, when The Bells of the Cascades announced that their handbell cruise for 2025 would be to Alaska, with Matthew Compton and Alex Guebert as the guest conductors no less, it didn't take long to register, over a year ahead!! It didn't take much effort to convince some bell-loving friends to go along and we were set!

This was the 16th handbell cruise for the group, and they definitely have it down to a science. We were divided into two groups of approximately 50 ringers: The Orcas and The Belugas. We requested our favorite positions to play and were assigned from there. When the ship was sailing, we had rehearsals, but if we were in port, we got to enjoy the area. Each group had their own repertoire of four pieces to work on. The host choir furnished all the music, the bells, and all the other equipment. We only had to bring our gloves and a binder. They even had a "Baby Whales" class for beginners! Laurel Crusinberry, wife of Iowa State Chair Dick Crusinberry, decided to try out the bells, and had a great time. That group even played a piece for the final concert of the event!!

The Bells of the Cascades gave a wonderful concert on the ship's World Stage. When their director Matthew Compton asked the very large audience who had never heard a bell choir before, over half of the hands went up! Area 8's own Cynthia Seputis was honored to be asked to fill in for a ringer who was not able to come at the last minute, and she did a fantastic job, after only one practice, of playing the very difficult program. The cruise groups gave a program on the last day, each playing the four pieces they had prepared. The only disappointing thing was that it was not on the World Stage, but in the rehearsal rooms, so there wasn't a lot of room for a large crowd. But, every seat they had for an audience was filled and there were lots of people listening in the hall.

The next cruise through The Bells of the Cascades will be in January 2027 to the eastern Caribbean. Brenda Austin has been announced as the guest clinician. If you visit their website, you can already sign up!! So, for all of you handbell lovers who can never get enough ringing in your lives, take advantage of this fun adventure!

(See photos on next page)



Above: Laurel Crusinberry, 2nd from the left, having fun learning with the “Baby Whales” group!

Below: Nancy’s group with Alex Guebert, Nancy Youngman, Curt Youngman, Dick Crusinberry, Patty Butler, Curt Butler, and Matthew Compton



Area 8 attendees, left to right: Gerald Orr (now of Oregon, but was very proudly claiming Missouri and Area 8!), Cynthia Seputis, Curt Youngman, Nancy Youngman (Chimes Chair), Curt Butler, Patty Butler, Dick Crusinberry (Iowa Chair) not pictured: Nancy Dreier

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Upcoming Area 8 Events

September 2025

September 21

4:00 pm The Agape Ringers Concert
St. Paul United Church of Christ, Belleville, Illinois

October 2025

October 5

4:00 pm The Agape Ringers Concert
First United Methodist Church, Lexington, Illinois

October 18

8 am to 4 pm 2025 Mid-Iowa Handbell Festival with Nick Hanson, clinician
Windsor Heights Lutheran Church

National Events

Visit <https://handbellmusicians.org/events/> for more information

August 18-21, 2025

Masterclass Series (composing, solo & ensemble ringing) Livonia, Michigan

August 21-23, 2025

Into the Forest Bell Tree Event, Livonia, Michigan

October 23-26, 2025

Distinctly Bronze West, Tacoma, Washington

February 26-March 1, 2026

Crescendo and Distinctly Bronze East, New Bern, North Carolina

July 14-18, 2026

National Seminar, Sharonville, Ohio

Publishing in Quavers

4 publications per year,
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Articles

Articles are due on the
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Questions?

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handbellmusicians.org](mailto:newslettereditor.area8@handbellmusicians.org)

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