



Walnut Valley Festival Supports Young Musicians with Performance Opportunities in Acoustic Kids Showcases

Register online now to perform at the Walnut Valley Festival in Winfield in September

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For the 28th year running, this September Andy May's Acoustic Kids Showcases will return to the Walnut Valley Festival in Winfield. Acoustic Kids provides a built-in opportunity for musicians aged 16 or younger to perform on the festival's official stages. Campers and single-day pass-holders can all take part, and each year, a stream of young musicians heads to Stage 2 on Friday and Saturday mornings to play for the best audience in the world. And, the audience, some of whom come every year to support the kids and watch them grow and progress musically from one year to the next, can see, "The Music's in Good Hands."

Pickers and singers of any skill level, beginner through pro, are welcome to take part in this inclusive program. To perform in the showcases, featured musicians must be 16 or younger, but accompanists may be any age. Music teachers may accompany their students and often use the program to give their students a real-life performance experience that is difficult to find elsewhere. Mixed-age groups are eligible - including family bands. A festival wristband is required to participate, but there is no additional charge. Pre-festival registration is also required: Further details and registration forms are available at andymay.com/acoustic-kids-walnut-valley-fest/ The showcases will take place Friday and Saturday mornings, September 14 and 15, from 9-11 a.m. on Stage 2.

"Andy has a remarkable ability to make kids feel welcomed and valued as a person and [a] musical contributor.... I'm so glad Acoustic Kids has stayed involved in the community, because not only does it give all these kids good memories, but as the kids grow up they'll remember that their contribution is important." – Sara Watkins, multi-year Acoustic Kids participant with Nickel Creek at the Walnut Valley Festival

The Acoustic Kids Ambassadors - a spin-off of the regular showcases - is geared towards young musicians who are planning to make a career of playing. The Acoustic Kids Ambassadors debuted at the Walnut Valley Festival in 2016, and will be back this year for the third year, giving the audience a chance to get to know these young emerging artists.



The Walnut Valley Festival, or simply "Winfield" to long-time attendees, produces "family fare" entertainment on 4 stages simultaneously; acoustic instrument contests; a large, quality, juried arts and crafts fair; and workshops. Festival attendance is around 15,000 annually, and it is a "participation" event: Most people who attend play an instrument of some kind, and a good portion of them bring their instruments and take part in the campsite picking. The festival has long prided itself on being educational as well as enjoyable, and the festival's founders, Bob and Kendra Redford, brought Andy May's Acoustic Kids on-board in 1991 to support and mentor the young musicians in attendance.

Between its 27 years at the Walnut Valley Festival, 18 years at MerleFest (Wilkesboro, NC), and 3 years at Guitar Town (Copper Mountain, CO), the venerable Acoustic Kids program has provided thousands of performance spots on festival stages for generations of young musicians - many of whom return year after year until they "age-out" at 17. Some participants are just learning to play their instrument, some play just for the fun of it, and some have gone on to international renown. Acoustic Kids celebrates their achievements to date.

"[Acoustic Kids] Showcases have inspired in me the confidence that comes from playing in front of thousands of people and having a successful experience. I can't overstate how grateful ...I am! [Andy runs] an extremely tight ship without taking any of the fun out of it." – Liam Purcell, multi-year Acoustic Kids participant and Ambassador with Cane Mill Road at MerleFest

Andy May is an accomplished guitarist, mandolinist, songwriter, and performer, as well as a popular educator. His relaxed, common-sense approach to teaching is rooted in his background in developmental learning, his interest in creative problem-solving, and his career as a musician. Building on his degree in Fine Arts and Art Education, he has taught thousands of people to play guitar and mandolin, has been an Artist-in-Residence in many schools, and has led seminars for youth and adults across the nation on such topics as creativity, performance skills, music history, and songwriting. He is a yearly performer and educator at major festivals like MerleFest and the Walnut Valley Festival and is a regular workshop contributor to the Country Music Hall of Fame.



Contact and Further Information:

Acoustic Kids:

acoustickids@andymay.com

615-428-1008

AcousticKids.com

AndyMay.com

Walnut Valley Festival:

620-221-3250

WVFest.com

hq@wvfest.com

EPK:

andymay.com/ak-wvfest-epk/

(Photos, One sheet, Press Release PDF)

