

celebrating 50 years of

GREAT RIVER



2026

FOLK FEST

.....



AUGUST 28-30

RIVERSIDE PARK - DOWNTOWN LA CROSSE, WI

GREATRIVERFOLKFEST.ORG

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Prairie Springs
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MAIN STAGE**

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WELCOME TO OUR 50TH ANNIVERSARY FESTIVAL!



In the summer of 1976, Fred and Barbara Starner, along with a group of kindred spirits, held the first Great River Traditional Music & Crafts Festival on the grounds of the University of Wisconsin – La Crosse. While there have been significant changes to the Fest in 50 years, much has also remained the same. We still have the same format with concerts at night and songswaps and workshops in the

daytime. Some of the music you hear this weekend could also have been played in '76. Most importantly, the positive feelings that the Festival has always engendered remain, thanks to all of us!

Along with what we usually feature, please check out our History tent as well as the banners placed in various spots on the ground, created for the '79 Fest by local sculptor Elmer Petersen. Tour the UW-L Research Vessel Prairie Springs and, if needed, cool-off in a solar-powered climate-controlled tent courtesy of one of our sponsors. Have a great Festival!

Doug McVey, Fest Chair



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La Crosse Center
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Plaza

FRIDAY
Riverside Ballroom

SATURDAY
North Hall


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Marta Martinez & William Katra

TRIBUTARY

Laura Moriarty
Ellen M Frantz

BEACHFRONT

Arden & Penny Ross
Glenn & Betsy Knowles
Celine Donofrio
Thomas & Rev Kristine Fahey
Mike & Carmen DeYoe

RIVERSIDE

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Dave Ford & Melinda Knutson
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Linda Blohowiak
Laura Lauderdale
David Siskind
Leslie Foote
Krista Henry
Dave Freismuth
Amanda Kelly
Kym Kronschnabel
Cameron Kiersch



"Here's to
50 more!"

Greg & Diana

"Folk music brings
people together to
connect in truth and
joy. Please enjoy 50
years of Great River
Folk Fest honoring
commitment to our
Community and all
those who made it
possible!"

Fran & John

"Congratulations Great
River Folk Fest! 50
years and counting!"

Jean & Mark

"Thanks to the
many hundreds of
volunteers over the
past 50 years who
shared their time
& talents to make
each year's Folk
Fest a success"

Jenny & Tom

"Happy 60 birthday to
Joe Schwem who, 50
years ago was inspired
to write and play music
at the second great
River Festival, when
Pete Seeger played."

Schwem Family

"Congratulations to
GRFF on 50 years of
great music and crafts.
We're looking forward
to many more years of
fun."

Pat & Bobbie

"In honor of my Aunt,
whose extraordinary
compassion for others
and love for our family
are a gift to everyone
who knows her. Here's
to this year's festival
bringing her the same
joy she so generously
gives to others."

Leo

*In Addition to Sponsors & Donors,
A Huge Thank You to Friends
and Volunteers of the Festival!*

DEDICATION

Again this year, for this festival, the La Crosse Band Shell is referred to as Will's Main Stage. It is to celebrate William Reckase who ended his life in April 2024 at the age of 31. Will, a La Crosse native, had been living in Europe for his last nine years. He was an amateur musician (and ardent karaoke performer) who enjoyed many genres of music and often shared his current favorites with friends. Music is important to many of us. Let's enjoy it this weekend at Will's Main Stage.



WILL'S MAIN STAGE

**Proud Sponsor
of the 2026 Great River Folk Fest**

BIG RIVER
Magazine

Covering the Heart of the Driftless Area for 33 Years



FESTIVAL PERFORMERS



Amadans

Saturday - 11:15-12:00 - **SOUTHFOLK**

Saturday - 1:00-1:45 - **CAMP FOLK FEST**



Creekbed Carter Hogan

Saturday - 4:15-5:00 - **NORTHFOLK**



Crooked Willow

Sunday - 1:45-2:30 - **NORTHFOLK**



Don Harvey

Saturday - 2:00-3:00 - **SOUTHFOLK**



Drew Peterson

Sunday - 3:00 - 3:45 - **NORTHFOLK**



Hans Mayer + Hot Sauce

Saturday - 1:30-2:15 - **NORTHFOLK**

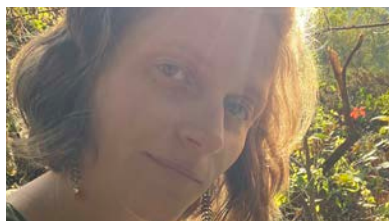
FESTIVAL PERFORMERS



Hemma

Saturday - 2:00-3:00 - **SOUTHFOLK**

Saturday - 3:30-4:30 - **SOUTHFOLK**



Jamie Sterling

Sunday - 2:15-3:15 - **SOUTHFOLK**



Jason Dea West

Saturday - 12:30-1:30 - **SOUTHFOLK**

Saturday - 5:00 - **WILL'S MAIN STAGE**



John McCutcheon

Saturday - 12:00-1:00 - **NORTHFOLK**

Saturday - 6:00 - **WILL'S MAIN STAGE**



Johnsmith

Saturday - 12:30-1:30 - **SOUTHFOLK**

Sunday - 2:15-3:15 - **SOUTHFOLK**



For **FURTHER DETAILS** and
BIOS of the performers,
scan the QR code.



FESTIVAL PERFORMERS



La Crosse Sessions Band

Friday - 7:00 - *WILL'S MAIN STAGE*



Lynn Biddick

Sunday - 2:15-3:15 - *SOUTHFOLK*



Maya de Vitry

Saturday - 12:00-1:00 - *NORTHFOLK*

Saturday - 7:00 - *WILL'S MAIN STAGE*

Sunday - 11:00-11:45 - *NORTHFOLK*



Roe Family Singers

Saturday - 2:15-3:00 - *CAMP FOLK FEST*

Saturday - 9:00 - *WILL'S MAIN STAGE*



Ross Thorn

Sunday - 11:00-11:45 - *NORTHFOLK*

Sunday - 1:15-2:00 - *CAMP FOLK FEST*



For **FURTHER DETAILS** and **BIOS** of the performers, scan the QR code.



GRFF SONGWRITER CONTEST

CONGRATULATIONS TO THIS YEAR'S FINALISTS

Songwriter Contest

FINALISTS

Sunday 11:00 AM - 12:15 PM

SOUTHFOLK

In keeping with the GRFF mission, the annual songwriting contest strives to promote public appreciation and support for new and emerging songwriters and to celebrate the songwriting craft. To promote regional involvement in the Fest, participation is limited to local talent (within 300 miles of La Crosse). Many impressive song submissions were received and judged by a panel of five. Five songwriters were selected to compete as Finalists in this year's GRFF contest. All of the finalists are skilled songwriters and they will be judged on a variety of criteria, including audience response. Please come to support the songwriting skills of these musicians.



Tim Case



Samantha Grimes



Sammie Hershock



Allison Sky



Ben Suchy

Songwriter Contest

WINNER

Sunday 3:45 PM

WILL'S MAIN STAGE

The Contest Winner performs again before the final concert of the weekend and receives the first prize of studio recording time. In addition, all finalists each receive a cash prize. Many thanks to our sponsor, Sound Strations Audio Productions Inc, for donating 10 hours of studio time for the Contest Winner.

2026 SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

FRIDAY, AUGUST 28

SOUTHFOLK

Old-Time Music Session - 5:30 - 6:45 PM

WILL'S MAIN STAGE

La Crosse Sessions Band - 7:00 PM

Watkins Family Hour - 8:00 PM

SATURDAY, AUGUST 29

NORTHFOLK

Sound Immersion by Joan
10:45 - 11:30 AM

POLITICAL/SOCIAL
Maya de Vitry, Soren Staff,
John McCutcheon
12:00 - 1:00 PM

Hans Mayer & Hot Sauce
1:30 - 2:15 PM

Square Dance with
The West Fork Gals & Jesse Downs
2:45 - 3:45 PM

Creekbed Carter Hogan
4:15 - 5:00 PM

SOUTHFOLK

Yoga with Sara Mae
10:00 - 10:45 AM

Amadans
11:15 AM - 12:00 PM

TRAVEL
Susan Werner, Johnsmith,
Jason Dea West
12:30 - 1:30 PM

ORIGINALS
Don Harvey, Hemma,
Unicycle Michael
2:00 - 3:00 PM

LOVE SONGS & HEARTACHE
Soren Staff, Hemma,
Sammie Jean Cohen
3:30 - 4:30 PM

WILL'S MAIN STAGE

Jason Dea West
5:00 PM

Susan Werner
8:00 PM

John McCutcheon
6:00 PM

Maya de Vitry
7:00 PM

Roe Family Singers
9:00 PM

2026 SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

SUNDAY, AUGUST 30

NORTHFOLK

SONGWRITING

**Taylor James Donskey, Ross Thorn,
Maya de Vitry** 11:00 - 11:45 AM

HUMOR

Susan Werner, Vance Gilbert
12:15 - 1:15 PM

Crooked Willow
1:45 - 2:30 PM

Drew Peterson
3:00 - 3:45 PM

SOUTHFOLK

Songwriter Contest Finals
11:00 AM - 12:15 PM

**Community Song Circle
with Liz Rog**
1:00 - 1:45 PM

ORIGINALS

**Lynn Biddick, Johnsmith,
Jamie Sterling**
2:15 - 3:15 PM

WILL'S MAIN STAGE

Songwriter Contest Winner - 3:45 PM

Vance Gilbert - 4:00 PM



Song Swap



Concert



Interactive



THANK YOU!

SOUND ENGINEERS:

Lonya Nenashev of Red Square Audio,
and Bob Stuber.



See next
page for

INTERACTIVE & CAMP EVENTS



INTERACTIVE

SING, PLAY, DANCE, AND LEARN!



Old-Time Music Session (jam)

Friday - 5:30-6:45 - **SOUTHFOLK**



Yoga with Sara Mae

Grounded Maple Yoga & Wellness

Saturday - 10:00-10:45 - **SOUTHFOLK**



Sound Immersion by Joan

Saturday - 10:45-11:30 - **NORTHFOLK**



Square Dance

with The West Fork Gals & Caller Jesse Downs

Saturday - 2:45 - 3:45 - **NORTHFOLK**



Community Song Circle

with Liz Rog

Sunday - 1:00-1:45 - **SOUTHFOLK**

**ALL Voices
Welcome!**

IN THE CAMP FOLK FEST TENT

WORKSHOP

Irish Music & Bluegrass Connection *with Amadans*

Saturday - 1:00 - 1:45 PM

WORKSHOP

Clawhammer Banjo *with Roe Family Singers*

Saturday - 2:15 - 3:00 PM

Song Circle (Unplugged)

Saturday - 3:45-4:15 PM

*Join host Tom Walter to take a turn sharing
a song linked to 50 years of this Folk Fest.
Sign up at the Merch Tent.*

WORKSHOP

Activism in the Arts *with Ross Thorn*

Sunday - 1:15 - 2:00 PM



FESTIVAL PERFORMERS



Sammie Jean Cohen

Saturday - 3:30-4:30 - **SOUTHFOLK**



Soren Staff

Saturday - 12:00-1:00 - **NORTHFOLK**

Saturday - 3:30-4:30 - **SOUTHFOLK**

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Full Service Bar & Updated Stage

FESTIVAL PERFORMERS



Susan Werner

Saturday - 12:30-1:30 - *SOUTHFOLK*

Saturday - 8:00 - *WILL'S MAIN STAGE*

Sunday - 12:15-1:15 - *NORTHFOLK*



Taylor James Donskey

Sunday - 11:00-11:45 - *NORTHFOLK*



Unicycle Michael

Saturday - 2:00-3:00 - *SOUTHFOLK*



Vance Gilbert

Sunday - 12:15-1:15 - *NORTHFOLK*

Sunday - 4:00 - *WILL'S MAIN STAGE*



Watkins Family Hour

Friday - 8:00 - *WILL'S MAIN STAGE*



For **FURTHER DETAILS** and
BIOS of the performers,
scan the QR code.

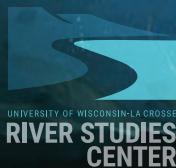


WATER POWER

The UWL River Studies Center is a multidisciplinary unit specializing in research and scholarship in the Upper Mississippi River and related freshwater ecosystems. The center has provided more than 50 years of research on our nation's great rivers and lakes.

AREAS OF EXPERTISE

- Aquatic chemistry and water quality
- Hydrographic and drone mapping
- Invasive species
- Contaminant effects on fish and wildlife
- Fluvial geomorphology
- Ecology of fish and invertebrates in the Upper Mississippi River and Driftless Area streams



To support the UWL River Studies Center and/or the R/V Prairie Springs, follow the QR code

Pictured: The Research Vessel Prairie Springs, a state-of-the-art watercraft funded by Prairie Springs: The Paul Fleckenstein Trust in partnership with J.F. Brennan Company, Inc.

CRAFTS

Amber Ascher Photography

Photography: tintypes and tinctures

Ebony Jewelwing Folk Medicine

Perfumes (cold-process) and balms

Elizabeth Higgins Arts

(formerly Driftless Handcrafts)

Printmaking and acrylic wall art

Empathic Dream

Candles (soy wax), wood-working, and art patches

The Geranium & The Gypsy

Floral crowns and wearables

Johanna Moldenhaur Art

Pottery

Let Me Spin You a Yarn

Yarn

Lyre Bird Studio

Print making

Merfolk

Mixed Media - Embroidery

Muskuy

Handcrafted jewelry and traditional textiles

Northwoods Penworks

Woodworking - Pens

Paige Elizabeth Artistry

Jewelry (wire-wrapped) and Macrame

Permanent Press

Print making: screen printing and letterpress

Rob Scrap Metal Art

Metal works: fun metal art

Rootstock Herbs LLC

Herbal teas, extracts, hygiene products, and chair massage

Stoneware Pottery

by Annie Goldman

Ceramics - pottery

Sweet Space Studio

Jewelry: resin earrings, bookmarks, & hair accessories

Tiana Traffas Art

Fine art collage, drawings, lino print patches and zines

Trinity Rae Photography & Art

Landscape paintings, ink drawings and photography

... and MORE!



a place of shelter and an all-ages open area for fun & creative activities, workshops, and an unplugged song circle.



**PUT YOUR FEET UP
& TAKE A BREAK!**

FOOD & BEVERAGE

Food & Beverages are Available All Weekend!

FRIDAY
Taco Town
Mia's Kitchen
MK Concessions
Two Scoops & A Bar

SATURDAY
Taco Town
Mia's Kitchen
MK Concessions
Two Scoops & A Bar
Bee's Knees Coffee
6B's Artisan Ovens
3 Chief's Frybread

SUNDAY
Taco Town
Mia's Kitchen
MK Concessions
Two Scoops & A Bar
Bee's Knees Coffee
6B's Artisan Ovens
3 Chief's Frybread

Taco Town

Made from scratch food blending Southern Mexican food with Northern Mexican influences. Tacos, sides and a refreshing beverage to beat the heat.

Mia's Kitchen

Mia's Kitchen on Wheels & Catering! Serving up Southern soul with a Caribbean twist made with love.

MK Concessions

Thai cuisine such as Pad Thai, fried rice, and Thai basil stir fry. Some of the most popular items on our menu are our homemade egg rolls!

Two Scoops & A Bar

Your vintage ice cream parlor on wheels. Bringing you delicious hard scooped cones, milkshakes, sundaes, floats and more!

Bees Knees Coffee

Bee's Knees is a mobile trailer based in the La Crosse area, serving handcrafted espresso drinks, teas, smoothies, & more!

6B's Artisan Ovens

Garlic cheesy bread with pizza toppings on fresh baked italian rolls.

3 Chief's Frybread

Frybread menu featuring tacos, walk-os, frydogs, rezdough, and Oreo bombs.



2026 FESTIVAL COMMITTEE

CRAFTS – Jacque Van Ravenhorst,
Srna Dabikj

DONATIONS – Erin Hussey, Doug McVey

FESTIVAL CHAIR – Doug McVey

FOOD & DRINK – Matthew Remus,
David Nash

GRANTS – Jenna Kelly, Erin Hussey

GRFA ADMINISTRATOR – Karen Houlihan

HOSPITALITY/GREEN ROOM –
Aila Meeuwsen

MARKETING – Esther Gvora,
Casey Severson, Erin Maslowski,
Doug McVey, Kathy Nelson

MERCH TENT – David Boen,
Celine Donofrio, Pat Connolly

NON-PROFIT EXHIBITORS –
Celine Donofrio, Doug McVey

PERFORMERS – Doug McVey,
Esther Gvora, Jenna Kelly, Nicky Nieling,
David Nash

PHYSICAL ARRANGEMENTS –
Greg Meeuwsen

PROGRAM – Erin Hussey, Celine
Donofrio, Jenna Kelly, Doug McVey

SONGWRITERS' CONTEST – Jeffrey Kelly,
Alex Toast, Nicky Nieling, Lynn Biddick

SOUND – Bob Stuber

SPONSORSHIPS – David Nash,
Alex Toast, Jenna Kelly, Esther Gvora,
Doug McVey, Erin Hussey

TICKETS – David Boen, Celine Donofrio,
Alex Toast

50th ANNIVERSARY PROJECTS –
Greg Meeuwsen, Doug McVey,
Erin Hussey, Matthew Remus, Jenna Kelly,
Celine Donofrio, Srna Dabikj, Bob Stuber

VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR –
Celine Donofrio

WEBMASTERS – Erin Maslowski,
Esther Gvora



A Huge **THANK YOU** to These Friends of the Festival



Cover Art & Poster Design - Jacqueline Van Ravenhorst

Program Graphic Design - Joe McCormick

Fest Map Design - Srna Dabikj



In 1976, Fred Starner started this Fest and credited Pete Seeger as an inspiration.

In 1977, Pete was a featured performer, sharing songs & words of wisdom.

“ Some of these songs are as old as the hills
and some are as new as today's headlines.
I always believed that the right song at the
right moment could change history. ”

Pete Seeger

LOOKING BACK &



MOVING FORWARD

GRFF organizers & volunteers needed!

Please consider volunteering to help plan the **2027 Fest!**



2025



Happy 50th Anniversary
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