

SPRING 2026

NEWS FROM THE NEXT GENERATION OF MUSICIANS

CHARLES HOOD LAUNCHES NEW BOOK PICKENS PORTRAITS



Local author and historian Charles Hood has announced the release of his newest book, a richly detailed look at the people, places, and events that shaped the community of Pickens. In keeping with his longstanding commitment to preserving local heritage and supporting young musicians, 100 percent of book proceeds will benefit the Ryan Hood Memorial Scholarship Fund, offered through the Young Appalachian Musicians

program which is administered by Preserving Our Southern Appalachian Music, Inc. a 501c3 non-profit.

The scholarship was established in memory of Ryan Hood, the late son of Charles and his wife, to ensure that young people have the opportunity to learn, play, and carry forward the region's musical traditions.

This new volume continues Hood's mission of celebrating the rich and often surprising history of Pickens, a town whose story reflects resilience, community, and pride. Drawing from archival research, photographs, newspapers, and firsthand accounts, the book brings to life stories of ministers and teachers, country doctors and hometown heroes, devastating storms and defining moments, as well as the everyday citizens whose quiet contributions shaped the character of the town.

The book includes 20 chapters, hundreds of photographs and maps, and a wide range of stories that connect past

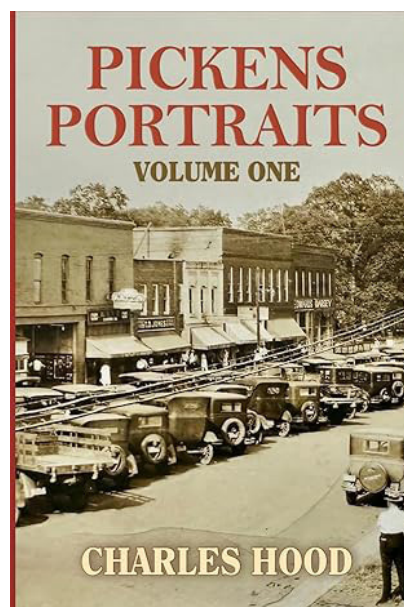
generations to the present day. It is at times humorous, at times reflective, and always rooted in a deep appreciation for community.

Hood's previous book, *Looking for Space*, raised more than \$5,000 for the scholarship program. With this new release, he hopes to raise \$10,000, which would provide meaningful support for young musicians pursuing lessons and instruments through POSAM's Young Appalachian Musicians programming.

"The goal of these Pickens books has always been twofold," said Hood. "First, to build awareness and pride in the remarkable history of this community. And second, to raise funds that help keep music alive for the next generation."

The book is now available through Amazon in both softbound and e-book formats. Community members are encouraged to support the effort by purchasing a copy and sharing the news with friends, family, and neighbors.

Every book sold directly supports music education for young people in the region.



MIDDLE/HIGH SCHOOL CAMP HUGE SUCCESS!



A record number of 30 middle/high schoolers met at Hagood Mill on April 25th to enjoy the 3rd year of the Saturday Music Camp. They were anxious to receive music instruction from instructors proficient in their skills on the mandolin, Blake Young; fiddle, Stephen Hudson; guitar, Jeremy McCollum; and banjo, Michael Hill.

During the morning half of the day, these youth attended workshops on how to become more proficient in their musical skills, such as tone, timing, improvisation, and their overall confidence as performers. The instructors covered essential real-world skills, such as playing back-up, working microphones, engaging with audiences, and understanding overall band dynamics.

Their lunch consisted of grilled hot dogs prepared by the Coordinator of the Camp, Logan Redding.

During the afternoon, all campers participated in the first class by observing the instructors, along with Logan Redding, performing for them. At the end of each

song there was interactive discussion of “best band” performance practices and areas that could have been improved upon during the performance.

Then, campers chose between a Luthier class, that was taught by local luthier Wallace Anderson, which covered maintenance, repair, and construction of an instrument while Stephen Hudson concentrated on the skills needed for harmony singing.

At the conclusion of the camp day a public jam session was held. A record number of campers stayed for the jam, in addition to a large number of local musicians came along to participate in the music that lasted well after sunset. This event served as an exciting opportunity for YAM's older students to deepen their musical knowledge, build practical performance skills, and strengthen connections with the traditional music community.



SPPKIDS CELEBRATE END-OF-YEAR!



An enormous crowd of YAM supporters filed into the auditorium of the Hagood Community Center on Saturday evening, May 2nd, to hear and see some of the best bluegrass music around! In concert were the Sweet Potato Pie Kids (SPPK) performing band, the talented band for the Young Appalachian Musicians.

Supporters were not only the beaming parents, but also some of the Oolenoy Community Friday night jamming folks, members of the YAM Administration, among which were the Founder of YAM, Betty McDaniel, and the new Director of Operations and Programs, Sondra Hennessee. Others were general bluegrass frequenters, who just love bluegrass music. None of these attendees were to be disappointed!

From the opening song to the conclusion, the audience was spell-bound by the delivery of the vocals and music that flowed beautifully from the lips and hands of these youth! The introduction was by Logan Redding, the Coordinator of the Sweet Potato Pie Kids, and sound was by Josh Johnson, who also heads up the Oolenoy Friday night jams at the Oolenoy Community Center. The opening song was by fiddle player, Ava Meece, who presented There is a Time.

The succession of young musicians that followed was amazing, with each one singing and playing their favorite tune. Mid-program, all played an instrumental entitled Cherokee Shuffle. Gracey Anderson concluded the program with The Old, Old House. Every single performer, in between the beginning and ending, were equally impressive: Maggie Alexander, Gannon Bates, Lily Anderson, Jase Langston, Cade Samples, Juan Espinoza-Carmona, Lyllian Accampo, Jayce Hamilton, and Everly Southerland.

All current SPPKids will be returning next year with the exception of those who are moving up to the new high school band. Out-going band members were presented with gifts: Ava Meece and Cade Samples. New Sweet Potato Pie Kid band members for 2026-27 are Virginia Soroka and Sawyer Miller on the guitar, and Blue Tucker on the banjo.

Wallace Anderson, who coordinated performances and led the band for the several months that Logan Redding was deployed on military duty was also presented with a gift of appreciation.

The new high school band members were introduced at the end of the musical selections, who also played impressively for a spell-bound audience: Andy Anderson, Ava Garrison, Kimberly Bear, Elene Holland, Ava Meece, and Cade Samples. (Unable to attend were: Lily Chappell and Seth Pilgrim.)

Then, awards were presented for those students attaining various levels of the checklist program. The finale was a beautiful piece entitled, Gold Rush.





YAM 2026 GRADUATE

Amelia Tebalt

Progressing her way through the YAM Program, Amelia Tebalt perfected her banjo playing skills. After attending as a camper for several years, she then served both as a Music Assistant and a Camp Counselor. Her quiet, mild manner made her an excellent fit to help young campers become adjusted to camp life for the week.

Amelia is graduating from the College of Charleston with a B.A. in Arts Management, Music Industry concentration, and a minor in Theater. While in college, she was a Co-Manager of the Production Team of the college's student-run record label, as well as the Programming Director and 1770 Liaison for Cistern Yard Radio.

Additionally, she was the sound designer and composer for CofC Stages productions of the Importance of being Earnest, Dracula, The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui, and the Mousetrap, for which she received impressive awards for each.

Performing throughout Charleston, Amelia plays with a band called Saint Canary, and is a member of the college's pep band, called Chucktown Sound.

Following graduation, Amelia will be performing as a Foley Operator in the opera, The Old Maid and The Thief at Spoleto Festival USA. She plans to continue to work in music and the performing arts industry with a focus on live and recorded sound.

"I enjoyed my time in YAM, both as a camper and instructor, because the program provides a supportive community in which to learn and celebrate traditional Appalachian music."

Congratulations to Amelia on her many accomplishments thus far and we wish her continued success!



Elijah Ellenburg

TALENT RECOGNIZED

When you're as talented as Elijah Ellenburg, one of our YAM alumni, you're just bound to be recognized! Approximately a year ago, Willie Wells and the Blue Ridge Mountain Grass from West Columbia, approached him to start filling in on the banjo for their band. Over time, the instrument changed to upright bass, but it was still Elijah playing. When you can play everything from banjo to guitar, upright bass, or dobro, you are well-able to fill so many spots in a band!

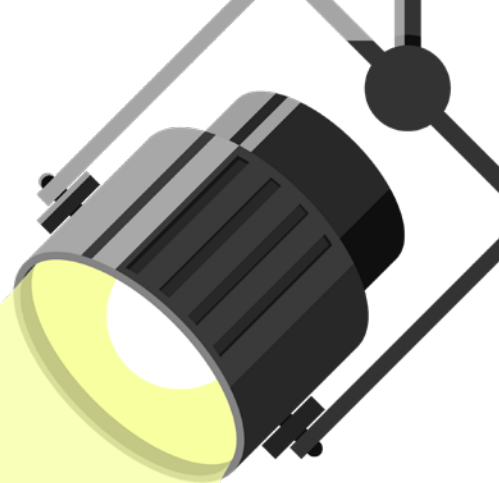
Willie Wells and the Blue Ridge Mountain Grass Gospel group was the 2024-25 winner of Christian Voice Magazine. The band also has been in the recording studio and will be releasing later this year. His future looks bright and the shows at which Elijah will be performing will be announced soon.

In addition to playing with this band, Elijah has also frequently performed at Bill's Pickin' Parlor in West Columbia and in numerous festivals last year. Elijah also juggles his time, playing the banjo for his local band, Bluegrass and Company.

Coming up through the YAM Program, Elijah has been a Music Assistant at YAM Camp, a Sweet Potato Pie Kid performing band member, and is currently a YAM instructor at numerous locations within the YAM Program.



SPOTLIGHT ON OUR SPONSORS AND DONORS



An operation of the magnitude of the Young Appalachian Musicians has a great deal of expenses often not visible to the general public. Our financial obligations are many. We subsidize all students' tuition and rental fees both in the Afterschool and Evening Programs, as well as our various camps. We have several music licenses to upkeep as well as insurance coverage. Then, there is the funding of special programs we hold within the YAM year, plus we have a payroll that covers a rather large staff of instructors, program directors, and special workshops staff, rental for storage of our instruments, and rental of special venues. These are just to name a few of the basic expenses that are constantly with us.

However, we have the most wonderful group of partners and sponsors who so graciously help us along the way, and we'd like to point out some of them to you and express our sincere appreciation and gratitude to each and every one of them.

The School District of Pickens County



is absolutely vital to our program, providing a space in local schools in the afternoon October – March each year in which we are allowed to hold music classes immediately after school. This is perfect for being able to offer the opportunity to take music lessons to all students grades 3 – 5 at the elementary

level schools in Pickens County. They have also provided grants to our program for many years to help support the arts education in Pickens County. In addition, we are allowed to have classes at Pickens Middle that incorporate YAM banjo and guitar classes into their clubs day each semester. Dacusville Middle has also taken advantage of the opportunity to participate in the YAM Program, as well.

Also, providing free printing of flyers, posters, handouts, leaflets, etc., **Hiott Printing** has been an absolutely tremendous support and blessing to us over the years. They are always so accommodating and stand ready to assist in any manner we need.



Another of our wonderful partners is **Blue Ridge Electric Co-op**.

They have supplied tents for us to use at YAM Camp, provided donations to help with the Winter Bluegrass Jubilee each year in January, and again provide so many things as the needs arise.

Then there's **Patterson Tax**, who helps us with tax preparation, payroll, and a variety of other services, all at a very affordable price!



The **Cliffs Residents Outreach (CRO)** has been a tremendous asset as a donor in providing scholarships to help with student tuition and rental, to provide academic tutoring following the pandemic, to fund TAM YAM Camp during the summer, and so many other worthwhile endeavors.

In addition, we have had several faithful individual donors who have given generously each year to help us keep the mission alive, and then there are the donations of instruments from such organizations as the **SC Bluegrass and Traditional Music Association**.



This is by no means an exhaustive list, but does give you a peek into our needs and some of the many donors and partners who have stepped up to become visionaries with us in our mission of preserving Southern Appalachian Music by instilling the love for bluegrass music into this generation in order to preserve it for future generations!

MALACHI IS GOING PLACES!

One of our gifted alumni fiddle players, Malachi Ellenburg, has been asked to fill in for a group out of Gatlinburg, Tennessee called Grassy Creek Bluegrass Band. They are an up and coming band that has been featured in the Bluegrass Today magazine and just recently signed with Sound Biscuit Studio. The first of their new songs will be released this month!

Among the venues Malachi has performed with the group are the Floyd Country Store in Floyd, VA and the Polk County Ramp Festival in Polk, Tennessee.

In addition to the Ryman Auditorium in Nashville, Tennessee, Malachi will be performing at many shows with this group in the coming months.

Malachi is a diehard music lover and is proficient on the fiddle, mandolin, and guitar. He came up through the YAM

Program and is currently an instructor for YAM at various locations, in addition to having served as a Sweet Potato Pie Kids performing band member. He currently also serves as a Music Assistant at YAM camp each summer. Whenever he's not performing with his band, Bluegrass and Company, he is playing with Grassy Creek Bluegrass Band or just seizing the opportunity to have fun jamming with others.



KIRBY COLSON JOINS THE POSAM BOARD



We are pleased to welcome the latest addition to our Preserving Our Southern Appalachian Music Board (POSAM) - Kirby Colson!

Upon first meeting Kirby one would not fathom the lofty heights she has reached in her professional

career. The person one meets is an easily approachable, warm, extremely modest, and kind lady who loves to garden, directs the choir at her church, is spouse to a wonderful husband (who is a retired attorney), mother to three lovely daughters, and a grandmother to eight grandchildren. We must say she also has such a HUGE heart - She loves to make life better for others, particularly children!

Her passion to provide the opportunity for children to explore the world of music, particularly those who would not otherwise be able to have this opportunity is one of the contributing factors to her accepting the position on the Board of Directors for POSAM.

However, Kirby's accomplishments are truly many! She is a graduate of the preparatory Department of The Peabody Conservatory of Music of John Hopkins University in Baltimore, MD. She has a B.A. in Piano Performance and has been a Nationally Certified Teacher of Piano since 1976. She taught piano and guitar with award winning students in St. Louis and Chicago for numerous years. Through Lyric Opera of Chicago she brought Opera into the classroom to 60 or more schools in the area of Chicago.

She trained teachers as well as 3rd and 4th grade students. She has served on numerous diverse boards and was also an executive for several national women's clothing companies.

Kirby is also a Eucharistic Minister in the Episcopal Church and a Diocesan Representative. She is the choir director at McKinney Chapel in Sunset, SC, and was a vocalist and played keyboard and guitar for the local Falls Creek Rush Band. In addition, she sings with the Greenville Chorale and has served as Chairman of its Board of Directors. She also serves as a Board member of Cliffs CRO.

Kirby has already been, and will continue to be, a wonderful voice for our organization with direct insight into how POSAM operates and our mission to present the lifetime gift of music to our youth in anticipation of our youth passing it on to future generations.

MAKING A HUGE COMEBACK!



The Oolenoy Slow Jam is being resurrected with a new breed of young musicians who have discovered the joy of jamming with their peers. Each first Friday evening of the month from 6 – 7 PM, these youth meet at the Oolenoy Community House, 5301 Dacusville Hwy, and participate in what has been dubbed the “Slow JAM”.

Youth just beginning to play,

and others, young and young-at-heart, who like to help along the way, join in to produce some really ear-pleasing Southern Appalachian music.

It's refreshing to see maybe a handful of kids start out jamming, and then others come in, take a seat in the circle, and join right in. There's something really quite therapeutic and uplifting about it, not only to hear the specialness of the Appalachian tunes fill the air, but also to see that circle of supporters chiming in to enlarge the circle so that this music will linger on not just through the evening, but down through the annals of time, drawing other children from future generations into the circle to experience for themselves the feel of how jamming with Southern Appalachian Music becomes a part of the soul!



UNIQUE FIRST TIME OPPORTUNITY FOR YAM STUDENTS!

For the first time ever, Young Appalachian Musicians (YAM) has been invited to be a part of the School District of Pickens County's Camp TalentEd, to be held at Easley High School. This camp is a free, specialized, week-long summer fine arts program targeting students in grades 4 - 9.

The focus will be on visual and performing arts (dance, YAMs, chorus, and theatre). It features professional instructors who help students to develop their artistic talents. Students are nominated by their instructors based upon their level of playing and commitment.

The dates of the camp are June 15-19. Instructors selected for the camp this year are Wallace Anderson (guitar), Mack Anderson (banjo), Matt Purinton (mandolin), and Justin Medlin (fiddle).

A public performance, showcasing what students have learned during the week will be held on Friday, June 19th, at 6 PM at Easley High School Auditorium.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

DATE	EVENT/DEADLINE	LOCATION	TIME
May 29, 2026	YAM Spring Scholarship Applications Due	Send to: tshort@yamupstate.com Contact: (864) 420-7363	
June 5, 2026	Slow JAM at Oolenoy	5301 Dacusville Hwy, Pickens	6:00-7:00pm
June 15 - 19, 2026	TalentEd Camp	Easley High School	
Jun 19, 2026	Talent Ed Public Performance	Easley High School Auditorium	6:00pm
Jun 20, 2026	Ryan Hood Memorial Music Scholarship Applications Due	Send to: tshort@yamupstate.com Contact: (864) 420-7363	
Jun 20, 2026	Trailblazer Park Celebration (SPPKids Perform - opening for Creekwater Collective)	125 Trailblazer Dr Travelers Rest, SC	7:00 - 7:15pm
Jun 27, 2026	Ryan Hood Memorial Music Scholarship Videos Due	Send to: tshort@yamupstate.com Contact: (864) 420-7363	
Jun 27, 2026	America 250 Celebration (SPPKids Perform)	Travelers Rest, SC	10:30am - 2:00pm

DEADLINE EXTENDED FOR SPRING MUSIC SCHOLARSHIPS

The Individual Music Scholarships for Spring 2026 are open to all rising 3rd - 9th graders to offset the cost of camp, lesson fees, or instrument rental. It is made possible by the Preserving Our Southern Appalachian Music Board Scholarship Committee. The deadline to apply has been extended to Friday, May 29th.

This \$100 scholarship may be applied toward the summer/fall Afterschool or Evening Music Program, or YAM Summer Camp, with the voucher being paid directly to the program selected. It must be used within one year or will be forfeited to the Scholarship Committee for reallocation. Selection will be based upon character, commitment, attitude, and need.

Submit all three parts of the completed application at once to tshort@yamupstate.com . Contact number: (864) 420-7363. Winners will be announced by June 6th.

YESIYAM

The YESIYAM Booster Club is dedicated to promoting community interest and cultivating support for the Young Appalachian Musicians Program, which is sponsored by Preserving Our Southern Appalachian Music, Inc., (POSAM), a charitable non-profit organization. All contributions are tax deductible. Your support will help ensure the continuity of the excellent instruction the children have come to expect. Those wishing to become YESIYAM booster club members or otherwise contribute to the program, may do so by sending to: POSAM, PO Box 412, Pickens, SC 29671. For further information, please call Betty at (864)230-9695 or email mcdanibw1@gmail.com.

Editor: Pauline Blackston
Designer: Jennifer Bryan

