



INTERNATIONAL BLUEGRASS MUSIC ASSOCIATION

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I'm burning the midnight oil on a Wednesday night in Nashville. Two months before World of Bluegrass and it's crunch time at the IBMA office, with all four staff members putting in overtime and a dozen or so committees and task forces doing the same. So many folks are organizing, planning, preparing to present their music and their merchandise for you in Nashville, Sept. 24-30 at the IBMA Business Conference, the IBMA Awards and the Bluegrass Fan Fest.

From all angles, this year's World of Bluegrass is an irresistible, "can't miss" event. It will include an incredible schedule of tributes and anniversaries, new and classic music, professional development and networking, songwriter and band showcases – and we'll be kicking up the hillbilly dust at the Ryman Auditorium for the IBMA Awards, our last big hurrah in Music City before World of Bluegrass moves to Raleigh next year. We're so looking forward to seeing you in Nashville in September!

It's been a challenging year behind the scenes at IBMA, with the departure of longtime executive director Dan Hays in February, a steep learning curve for our brilliant two new staff members Katherine Coe and Caroline Wright, and new duties for Jill Crabtree and me. Working as your interim director for the past five months has been an opportunity for me to lead and serve the membership in some different ways, as well as a chance for many of you to see me in a different light though we've known each other for years.

Our friends at BluegrassToday.com have described IBMA as being "at the crossroads" in a series of articles this year. I prefer to think of our second 25 years as simply a new, exciting

chapter -- an opportunity to re-evaluate our mission, re-focus, and continue to work together for the future of bluegrass music. Our basic goal -- to help bluegrass, as former IBMA President Pete Wernick used to say -- has not changed. But *how* we do that needs to change a bit every year. New leadership and a new convention site next year will give us the chance to re-create our events and extend our reach as an organization. There's more in store -- online and in person at World of Bluegrass -- that I absolutely cannot wait to tell you about!

We've had a couple of years of devastating loss, with the passing of heroes and dear friends like Hazel Dickens, Earl Scruggs, Doc Watson, Doug Dillard, Everett Lilly, Warren Hellman, Marty Godbey, Liz Meyer, and more. Each time it feels like a death in the family because we *are* a family, in addition to being a professional industry and a community of fans. World of Bluegrass this year will be a chance for us to share some memories and honor our traditions, while also celebrating new music on the Awards, Fan Fest and Showcase stages, with the new Momentum Awards, and literally around every corner in the Nashville Convention Center.

My goal as your interim director is to work with you to make membership in IBMA relevant and of value. The organization exists to *serve*, as well as to *lead*. If we're helping you do well individually, your success will bring bluegrass music (and great festivals, associations, radio shows, workshops, and banjos) to a bigger audience. But there are two sides to the coin.

In addition to working to give you more, we'll ask more from you. If I could plant one idea in your minds today, it would be to remind you that the members of IBMA *own* this organization. The staff works for the board, and the board works for *you*. We're like 2,500 co-owners of a little country store -- all chipping in our time and resources and expertise to make our business a success. If we help each other, we can achieve our goals faster. We step up as sponsors and advertisers, and volunteer as mentors, committee members, speakers, and Fan Fest bands. We pay our own way, share creative new ideas, pass the torch, and each do our part to make the bluegrass grow -- because in addition to what we're all doing separately, there are some things that can still be accomplished more effectively and more powerfully as a group.

I'd like to thank each of you for what you're doing to make bluegrass music strong, and say it's an honor and a privilege to work alongside of you. *And? I look forward to seeing you in September!*

-Nancy Cardwell

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