

A close-up photograph of a young girl with dark hair and bangs, wearing a blue headband and a dark blue shirt. She is looking down intently at her violin, which she is holding across her chest. Her right hand is on the bow, and her left hand is on the neck of the instrument. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

“You Could Hear It Talk You Could Hear It Sing”

... were the words from a renown bluegrass song by Bill Monroe, Father of Bluegrass, when he sang about his Uncle Pen playing the fiddle. The chorus words were “Uncle Pen played the fiddle, Lordy how it would ring, you could hear it talk, you could hear it sing.”

Even at the young age of nine years, Kathleen Myers, of Keyser, WV, knows how to make her fiddle sing. See Kathleen's story on pg. 16

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At home in the mountains, local bluegrass band, Lonesome Highway recently took 5th in a national contest at Nashville, TN. Left to right are: Jody Southerly, Jimmy Kountz, Tim Southerly and John Arnold. One of the pluses of bluegrass music is the ability to play just about anywhere—the instruments are acoustic (not requiring electricity).

As a working member of a bluegrass band, John Arnold says the festivals provide a great atmosphere and opportunity for people to share the music with each other. “Everyone has a good attitude about sharing the music and promoting the music as much as we can. I guess we’re all ambassadors of bluegrass music.”

Dan Hayes agrees with John, pointing to the fellowship, the camaraderie and the kind of community spirit between the fans at bluegrass festivals. “The whole fellowship surrounding the festivals is something that everyone enjoys and it’s what I think is rather unique,” says Dan. “It’s most evident at many of these festivals in what we call the parking lot jam sessions or parking lot picking. Rarely do you go to a concert and, after it’s over, all of the fans

head to the parking lot to get out their instruments and play with one another and make music,” he said. “Bluegrass music will be the centerpiece but what you find are people that are very welcoming and very inclusive. It is a family atmosphere and people want to make music with each other and actually get to know each other better.”

So pack up your family, bring your lawn chairs, your appetite for food and fun, and expect to hear some first-rate live music at a bluegrass festival near you. There are plenty to choose from and most are just a short drive away from where you are right now.



Kathleen—continued from pg. 14

Nine year-old Kathleen Myers looks like a typical American girl who enjoys school and playing with her friends. But there is a difference between Kathleen and the other fourth graders at Keyser Primary School. When you put a fiddle in one hand and a bow in the other, Kathleen is a child prodigy whose musical talent is just beginning to blossom. This will mark her third full year of competition at fiddle contests in the area and according to her father, Ed Myers, Kathleen is gearing up for a breakout year on the fiddle circuit. “It really opens peoples eyes when they see a girl that young playing so well,” said Ed, who repairs fiddles as a hobby and introduced his daughter to the fiddle several years ago. “People react very positively toward her at the contests and she really enjoys being in the spotlight,” he said. “Performing in front of an audience has been very good for Kathleen.

Last year, “While competing in a total of eleven contests, Kathleen won five first, and three seconds in area competitions,” said Ed.

John Arnold, a local bluegrass musician, has seen Kathleen’s fiddle playing up close, serving as a judge at last year’s Peach Festival fiddle contest in Springfield, West Virginia. “She’s nine years old and she’s pretty good. You can tell she’s grown up around music and I’d say she’s on her way to being an excellent player,” said John. “Her dad plays guitar, her mom plays the fiddle and her brother plays mandolin. The Myers family is definitely passing the music tradition down to the next generation.”

As for Kathleen, she says she’s looking forward to getting out there on stage again this summer. “I love playing the fiddle but I enjoy participating in the contests more than anything,” she said. “You have a lot of fun at the contests and learn a lot from the other fiddlers.” Her dad says Kathleen has come to realize that winning competitions is great but she gets a lot of enjoyment out of playing in front of an audience.

There are many fiddle contests (*see list on pg. 19*) in the area that are within a short drive. If you go to one you will surely see fiddle players of all ages take their turn on stage to compete against each other. But if you are lucky enough, you just might come across a young, talented fiddler named Kathleen Myers and it will be a musical experience you will never forget.

Fiddle Contests in this Area

Friendsville, Maryland — 3rd Saturday in July at the park

Cumberland, Maryland, Mid Atlantic Region Championships — 4th Saturday in October at Washington Middle School

Burlington, West Virginia, Burlington Apple Harvest Festival Fiddle Contest — October 6, 2002 at 1:00 p.m. at the Apple Butter pavilion, Burlington Children's Home Campus. For information call: Vicki Ginn 304-788-2342 Ext. 235

Oakland, Maryland, Maryland State Fiddle & Banjo Championship — October 11th & 12th 2002 at Southern High School. For information call: Heather Hanline at The Dove Center 301-334-6255

Nearby Bluegrass Festivals

MARYLAND

April 25-27, Arcadia, Reisterstown (410) 374-2895

July 13-14, Westminster (410) 857-2771

July 19-21, Puzzly Run Folk Life Center, Grantsville (301) 746-7040

August 8-11, Leonardtown (301) 475-8191

September 19-21, Arcadia, Reisterstown (410) 374-2895

September 20-21, Berlin (410) 641-4151

September 21, Deale (410) 867-2400

PENNSYLVANIA

May 16-19, Gettysburg (717) 642-8749

May 23-26, Reinholds, Denver (717) 445-9496

August 3, Lancaster (717) 299-8217

August 22-24, Gettysburg (717) 642-8749

September 1-2, Berlin (814) 267-3097

VIRGINIA

May 5, Winchester (540) 662-3863

May 24-25, Culpeper (540) 399-1173

June 15, Mouth of Wilson (540) 579-7092

September 14, Norton, Wise (540) 328-6018

WEST VIRGINIA

June 23-29, Snowshoe, Marlinton (304) 799-7121

June 27-30, Summersville (304) 872-3145

August 9-11, Elkins (304) 637-1209

Note: Bluegrass festivals should not be confused with country music festivals — they are not the same. At most country music festivals alcohol beverages are allowed and sold. This is not so at a bluegrass festival.



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