

Let the Music Play *By Charles Hood, MD*

May 23, 2017, is a dividing line for my wife Anita and me. On that date, we learned that our younger son Ryan had unexpectedly died. As a music major at USC studying jazz guitar, he was only 20 years old. Before that terrible day, our daily lives were mostly good, but after the devastating loss, we struggled to pick up the pieces. The music seemed to die along with Ryan.

Looking at photographs of our late son during his happy and carefree childhood was extremely difficult at first. With the passage of time, however, the healing process has enabled us to look back at some of the many good times that he experienced. One of our favorite memories is when Ryan was introduced to the guitar. He was in elementary school that day a community volunteer musician visited his classroom. The man brought practice guitars for all the kids, and once Ryan had his instrument nestled on his lap with his left hand on the headstock and his right on the soundboard (he



was a leftie), he was immediately hooked.

At his insistence, we bought Ryan his first entry-level acoustic guitar. That's when the magic happened because a true

passion for the instrument emerged. Ryan had already been introduced to music instruction on the piano, and the guitar seemed to come naturally to him. Watching him play during those early days, his small hands struggled to span the fretboard and press the strings; he had to stretch a bit to reach every note. But given the innate ability that all children seem to have (compared with adults) to pick up the techniques necessary to play any instrument, it wasn't entirely surprising to see Ryan eagerly learn his pentatonic scales, play Barre chords, and work on his slides, vibratos, and hammer-ons.

As he grew during middle school and high school, Ryan's proficiency in guitar-playing became something of a sensation. He had that "it" quality that allowed him to take his playing to another level. He and some friends created a band, Ropeswing Marathon, and the group played at local venues. Meanwhile, he continued with his private guitar instruction and decided that he would study music in college in preparation for his professional career. That's where his promising journey abruptly came to an end.



Ask anyone who has gone through what we've endured, and they'll tell you that one of a parent's greatest fears is the thought that their late child will be forgotten.

Then an old friend—a classmate of mine from the Pickens High School Class of 1979—Judge Perry Gravely came up with a beautiful idea. Perry knew that I loved Pickens—we still have a weekend place near the Holly Springs Center—and that the music program headed by YAM (Young Appalachian Musicians) needed funds. Given Ryan's love of the guitar, what could be a better way to honor his memory (and my hometown) than to create a fund in Ryan's name offering need-based scholarships to children involved in the YAM program? Perry got the Ryan Hood Memorial Musician Fund set



up and made a generous donation to kickstart it. My family embraced the idea and began to make contributions as well.

*continued on
next page ...*

Let the Music Play continued...

Earlier this year, we decided to make a concerted effort to broaden the appeal for donations to the fund. The reason was simple: the demand for the YAM programs was steadily increasing while the number of economically disadvantaged kids applying for slots was going up as well. Before committing to such a campaign, I decided to take a closer look at what actually goes on at the Holly Springs Center. Two of its greatest volunteers and champions, and YAM's Co-Directors, Betty McDaniel and Pauline Blackston, arranged for a tour and even a private "mini-concert" by three YAM alumni! These young women were so impressive as they entertained us with their superb musicianship on the guitar, banjo, and mandolin. I knew immediately that had Ryan still been alive, he would have loved the whole idea.

We have set up an ambitious goal for the summer of 2024 to raise enough money to allow as many children in Pickens County to be involved in the YAM programs as possible. Won't you join us in this worthy effort? Any donation amount would be greatly appreciated. Thus far, we have received nearly 50 donations from more than 20 states totaling more than \$7,000. Our goal is to reach \$10,000 before the end of the year. We have been astonished by the level of support thus far—a true testament to the generous spirit of our many friends and those who loved Ryan. And as his parents, we are gratified by the knowledge that Ryan's name will live on to inspire another generation of kids to learn the music of their heritage.

As the three talented performers played for me a couple of months ago inside one of the classrooms at the Holly Springs Center, I couldn't help but tap my foot along and smile. Music is such a joyous expression and a wonderful activity, and learning how to play an instrument is a very worthwhile pursuit. There is a real sense of accomplishment in playing songs with your own hands, and the wholesome appeal of music just makes you feel better about humanity in general. It was at that moment, too, that a thought ran through my mind. The music, once silenced in my family, was playing once more. And that made me happy.

To Give

Visit <http://www.yamupstate.com/ryan-hood-memorial.html> to make an online donation in any amount. If you would rather send in your donation by check, please make your check to POSAM (Preserving Our Southern Appalachian Music—the non-profit which supports YAM) and write Ryan Hood Memorial Musician Fund on the index line. Mail it to the following address:

Ryan Hood Memorial Musician Fund
c/o Betty McDaniel
792 Holly Springs School Road
Pickens, SC 29671

Cheeseburgers in Paradise

Jenni and Jarred Brink, owners of the popular Six Mile Coffee Shop - Red, White, and Brew, are one more unique community-minded couple! That's why it's really not surprising when they came up with the idea of a Jimmy Buffet Concert in honor and memory of the late aforementioned singer and songwriter of tropical rock music which promoted enjoying life in the moment. Who hasn't heard his "Margaritaville" and "Cheeseburger in Paradise?!"

The Concert came together as the local group "JST RHRSN" agreed to sing those relaxing 70's beach songs made popular by the ever-beloved Jimmy Buffet. The Brinks served up 250 Margarita and Pina Colada Flavor slushies and burgers at the 102 S Main Street Paradise. Parrott Heads flocked to this live music and enjoyed an evening drifting away to Margaritaville, all in the name of a very worthy cause.

The Silent Auction held in conjunction with this evening brought in a whopping \$1,000.00 to benefit none other than our own Young Appalachian Musicians! The funds are to be used for instrument needs or scholarships, which are two areas of constant need. To paraphrase Jimmy Buffet just a bit, "Count all your blessings. Remember your (musical) dreams!"



CLIFFS RESIDENTS OUTREACH

ENABLING UPSTATE CHILDREN TO SUCCEED

In 2007 a group of Cliffs residents established a non-profit, Cliffs Residents Outreach (CRO), with the mission to “provide resources to regional children that promote academic and life-long success”. As the Cliffs communities grew, so did CRO. There are now five individual CRO’s providing financial support to their local communities.

The Vineyard’s CRO focuses its resources on Pickens County children and programs. For the last several years, YAM has been one of their supported programs in Pickens County. Recognizing that instrumental music education was limited at the elementary school level, the Vineyards CRO sought out YAM as a way to expand music education for younger children. Research has shown that learning a musical instrument can help fire up the brain circuitry used for languages and math. After all, music is a language!

The Vineyards CRO supports other Pickens County programs. In 2022 they launched the Dolly Parton Imagination Library which mails a free, monthly age-appropriate book to children in Pickens County between the ages of 0-5. Currently there are 3,000 children registered and growing! They purchased a bookmobile for the Pickens County Library System to aid in bringing

books, literacy, and programs to the far reaches of the county. They have provided technology to the Pickens County Career and Technical Center which serves over 1,200 high school students. They provide funding for Camp iRock, scholarships at the high school level and financial aid to student clubs at both Pickens High and Middle School. And they have long provided support to Pickens and Hagood Elementary students and their families.

The five CRO communities together provide about \$500,000 in annual financial support across the upstate. A range of programs are supported including technology education, human services, nutrition, farm technology education.

Both in 2022-23 and this year, 2023-24, CRO-Vineyards has chosen to help support the YAM and YAM+ program, particularly at Pickens Elementary and Hagood Elementary. In addition, they have helped fund our two TAM YAM Camps for the past two summers. We’re so appreciative to this charitable group of people for their help with these programs, especially as we were rebuilding after Covid!

Meet Tiffany Short, New YAM Assistant Director

Hello! My name is Tiffany Short.

I grew up in Liberty, SC. I attended Lander College and earned a degree in Music Education. I also hold a certification in Elementary Education and have a Master’s Degree in Education from Southern Wesleyan University. I taught in the Pickens County School System for 32 Years. I have a private piano studio in my home and I have worked with the Young Appalachian Musician Program for 14 years. I have served as a camp counselor, school program director, assistant camp director, camp director, and most recently have become assistant director of the YAM Program overall.

I am married to Brad Short and we reside in Easley. We have two daughters, Sarah Katherine and her husband Bo, and Addison. Our greatest news is we have a new granddaughter, Micah Lynn. She is our joy! We have a Yorkie named CJ and we love the CLEMSON Tigers!



YAM Alumni Performed and Competed at International Bluegrass Music Association

Each year in the early fall our Young Appalachian Musicians/YAM alumni have the ultimate chance to learn, network with other bluegrass enthusiasts, and perhaps perform at a large, international event—IBMA. The International Bluegrass Music Association is held around the first week in October in Raleigh, NC each year.

One of the best opportunities at IBMA is Kids on Bluegrass! Youths under 19 years old audition from all over the world. The ones who get the coveted invitation are organized into several different bands early in the week. These bands learn to play different songs from each other, with the help of their leaders. At the end of the week each band performs their set on various stages around the downtown area. Molly Johnson, former Sweet Potato Pie Kid (YAM performing band) and now YAM instructor, was honored with an invitation, and at IBMA she learned and performed with Kids on Bluegrass this year.



Lilly Svrlinga and Judson Stone (former SPPK and now instructors) along with local talent John Paul Sepulveda received a coveted invitation to play on the JAM (Junior Appalachian Musicians) Stage as well as former SPPK and current YAM instructors, brothers Elijah and Malachi Ellenburg and Alyssa White (Bluegrass and Co.) who played on the Youth Stage.

Last, Danielle Yother, who was in the original YAM group in 2008, a SPPK, a YAM instructor and currently in the band, Wilder Flower, was chosen to compete in the Finals for "Picking for the Prize" Flatpicking Guitar contest. This contest was held Friday morning on the Workshop stage and Danielle received 3rd place in this national contest!

We are so proud and want to congratulate all of these very talented Pickens County young people!

New Opportunities in Music for our Middle and High Schoolers

In an effort to provide additional opportunities for Middle and High School students, this year POSAM (Preserving Our Southern Appalachian Music – the non-profit that supports YAM) received a Folklife and Traditional Arts Grant from the SC Arts Commission to help support or enhance four initiatives.

The first initiative is to continue offering the "Each one, Teach one" method of training in which "experienced" instructors teach more advanced musical level middle and high schoolers how to instruct at TAM YAM Camp, or in another YAM Program, such as the Afterschool or Evening Music Programs.

Secondly, this initiative will allow for more jamming and performing opportunities at YAM Camp. The middle and high schoolers will also be able to participate in an

After Camp Evening Party, at which time they will be able to participate in workshops, performing on stage, and other types of enjoyable activities. Additionally, more classes will be offered that appeal to middle and high school students, such as ukulele, claw hammer banjo, harmony, and jamming.

Lastly, a couple of mini-camps will be held on Saturdays either at Hagood Mill or Holly Springs Center, at which the middle and highschoolers will be able to receive 4-5 hours of music instruction or workshops, to observe more advanced players performing, and to have opportunities to jam and perform themselves, and also enjoy entertaining activities and will be served food and refreshments as well.



NOT Your Average Joe!

When we refer to an individual as “just not your average Joe”, that is spoken quite sincerely when we are referring to Dr. Joe Padgett! His credentials quite frankly make one step back and consider what a gifted, learned man he is! He was a Professor at the University of South Carolina from 1971 – 2003 in the Department of Mathematics and Statistics. Then, he became a Professor at Clemson University also in the School of Mathematical and Statistical Sciences as an Adjunct Professor from August 2003 to May 2011. His honors, awards, and professional memberships are quite astounding! Additionally, he has written numerous research grants, publications, and books and he has been a Presenter at dozens of professional meetings and gatherings as well as being on many editorial boards. Dr. Padgett also served on the POSAM Board as Secretary from the fall of 2010 through the summer of 2017 and was at the same time a member of the Board of the Pickens Presbyterian Child Development Center. He also writes music, jams every other Wednesday evening with a group from his church, and participates on Wednesday afternoons with the AmJam at Hagood Mill. Occasionally, he also plays with a group at the Pickens Presbyterian Church to

present special music.

However, there is another side to Joe – That Joe that has enjoyed woodturning, having made, and also taught many others to make some of the nicest wooden pens you’ve ever laid your eyes upon. -

That Joe who has acted as an instructor of woodworking for field trips, targeting children who visited the Holly Springs Center - That Joe who for several years taught students to play stringed instruments free of charge, and who also purchased damaged instruments, repaired them, and donated them to YAM - That Joe who presently donates many, many hours of his time and resources to repair and restring rental instruments, and to purchase new instruments and accessories, at no charge to the YAM Program whatsoever throughout the entire year!



Now, wouldn't you have to agree with me that Dr. Joe Padgett is "NOT your average Joe!"

Winter Bluegrass Jubilee *Expect More in 2024*

With the coming new year, an air of excitement and anticipation sets in, as well and the expectation of better and more than ever before! That is our goal for Winter Bluegrass Jubilee slated for January 20, 2024. We are inviting our community leaders and other individuals to consider donating through a corporate sponsorship, or individually, to the 2024 Winter Bluegrass Jubilee, our largest YAM fundraiser of the year. There are numerous benefits to being a corporate sponsor, among which is your company logo included on advertising media, including the event website, and signs and banners within the event. Several sponsorship levels are offered with additional benefits for each level attained. Individuals are also invited to sponsor, and several donation payment options will be available. As an appreciation gesture for all donors, a “Thank You” Party will be held during the event to honor all those who donate above the base level.

This indoor musical festival will feature an afternoon-evening event with concessions, workshops,

and musical entertainment held within the state-of-the-art Pickens High School Auditorium. All proceeds from the event will go toward support of the Young

Appalachian Musicians Program, which is presently serving approximately 400 youth and their families in more than nine schools. In the past, our Jubilee Fundraisers have helped to assist students in their dream to be able to learn to play a banjo, fiddle, mandolin, or guitar, when otherwise this was totally out of their reach. The Jubilee has also assisted in obtaining donations of instruments, and funds to purchase instruments, as well as the accessories to be able to use the instruments. More information will follow concerning our annual fundraiser in the upcoming weeks.



Calling All YAM Alumni!

We are now in our 16th year of having a YAM program and have decided to start an alumni directory—"YAM Alums." A YAM Alum is someone who is beyond the 8th grade and/or not taking lessons or part of SPPK. We often have people ask where an alum is, contact info, or what they're doing. We also have people ask contact info for people who might perform for them, tell them about opportunities, etc.

If you'd like to have your name and other info printed in our YAM Alum Directory, please fill out any info below and photo/email to blackspm1@outlook.com or mail to Betty McDaniel, 792 Holly Springs Sch. Rd, Pickens, SC, 29671. We won't post publicly or give out your contact info without your permission. We may even do a reunion one day!

Take care and we hope to hear from you soon! Betty and Pauline

YAM Alumni Form—Please fill out all questions you care to

1. Name of YAM Alum _____
2. Email _____ Cell Phone _____
3. Mailing Address (if at a temp address now, please give parent's address)

4. What are you doing now? School: Where _____ Work: Where _____
Other? _____
5. Where are you living now? ☐ At home ☐ At school ☐ On my own ☐ Other _____
6. Are you still involved in music and how?
7. What's your status? ☐ Married ☐ Single ☐ Have children?
8. Any news??

Please fill out permission form(s) below:

- ☐ I give my permission to use my info above as needed
☐ Please don't post publicly any info above without my permission
☐ Please don't give out my contact info unless I give my permission

Your signature _____ Date _____

We hope you'll send us updates as things change!



This newsletter dedicated to supporting the Young Appalachian Musicians program is provided at no charge to all YESIYAM members. The letter is published through volunteer efforts and the support of Preserving Our Southern Appalachian Music, Inc. and other sponsors. Designer: Jennifer Bryan

The Young Appalachian Musicians program is sponsored by Preserving Our Southern Appalachian Music, Inc. (POSAM) a charitable non-profit organization and all contributions are tax deductible. To join the booster club, YESIYAM, or otherwise contribute to the program, donations may be sent to: POSAM, c/o Betty McDaniel, 792 Holly Springs School Road, Pickens, SC 29671. For further information call (864) 878-4257 or e-mail yam.upstate@gmail.com.

