

FUNDAMENTAL TONE

Newsletter of Area I, Inc. • American Guild of English Handbell Ringers

Atlantic Provinces, Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont

Volume XXIII, No. 2

May 2009

UPCOMING EVENTS

May 9, 2009

Skill Building Workshop

First Baptist Church
Southington, CT

May 19, 2009

Boston Handbell Festival

Old South Church, Boston, MA

June 6, 2009

Workshop with Cathy Moglebust

Boston University

June 25–28, 2009

Festival/Conference '09

University of Maine at Orono

October 3, 2009

New Hampshire Repertoire Ring

First Church, Nashua, NH

November 14, 2009

High School Ring Out

with Timothy Waugh
Wachusett Regional
High School, Holden, MA

May 1, 2010

Rhode Island Spring Ring

with Bill Alexander
Wheeler School, Providence, RI

February 5–6, 2010

Directors' Seminar

Framingham, MA

November 6–7, 2010

Adult Ringing Weekend

Location To Be Determined

November 13, 2010

High School Ring Out

Location To Be Determined

Sue Says... *a few words from the Chair*

Well, we have successfully (and joyfully) survived another Easter with sunrise service (brrrrr...), followed by breakfast, followed by 9 a.m. service, followed by 11 a.m. service, followed by dinner at sister-in-laws, followed by complete and utter collapse from exhaustion! Now we move on to spring concert schedules for which we have been preparing over the long winter months. And I know it's spring because the flowers, buried by the winter snow, are now poking through the dirt, begging me to pick up the rake and clear away the leaves. So, time to do some raking of your own—clear out the music room clutter, organize the music files, sift through ALL the catalogs, order your seeds—I mean, music!—then stand back and watch your program bloom.

Your next steps will be to continue to prepare your music for Festival/Conference '09—I am filled with anticipation! Many of you may have already received your festival schedule of classes for which you pre-registered. This is a “first” for Area I and we hope you will appreciate all the efforts of the committee members who made this possible.

Please continue to read this newsletter for additional information on Festival/Conference from our festival chair, Patrick Gagnon.

I was privileged to attend an AGEHR National meeting in Chicago this spring along with other chairs from across the United States. We spent many hours discussing and helping to formulate goals for our National Board many of which are applicable for areas at the local level.

Membership was a key topic—how do we increase our membership

(continued on page 2)

IN THIS ISSUE

High School Ring Out 2009	3
Festival/Conference '09 Info	4
Performance Anxiety (Part 1)	6
State Reports	9, 10, 11
St. Christopher Special Friends Handbell Choir (Part 2).....	12

It is with great pleasure that we announce the Area I Board election results.

Chair-Elect: Griff Gall

Secretary: Norah Piehl

Treasurer: Sue Wilber

Thank you to all who returned your voting ballots.
Sue Henderson, Chair

Visit the Area I web site at: www.agehrarea1.org

SUE SAYS...


(continued from page 1)

and how do we maintain the membership of our existing members, both nationally and locally? As a board, we continuously work to provide opportunities for our members and ringers to participate in learning and ringing and even non-ringing activities. And, while we brainstorm about how to do this on a regular basis, you, the ringers and directors, have a voice as well. We want to hear from you! Your ideas, suggestions and comments help us to be responsive to your needs and desires. Please take this opportunity to contact any board member with your

thoughts—contact information is available on the Area I web site as well as in this publication.

We are also moving forward with plans to bring back “Family Handbell Camp!” Unfortunately, as you know, we were unable to return to Camp Ogontz due to scheduling issues. But, we have located a wonderful camping facility possibility in southeastern Connecticut. Camp Wightman is located in North Stonington, CT, and is under the direction of none other than our own Area I’s David and Karen Warfield! They are active members of Central Baptist Church in Norwich, where David serves as the

Director of Music and Karen is the Director of Worship Arts. They have been serving at Camp Wightman since September 2008 as Retreat Hosts. David has a long history of serving Area I in many capacities and we are confident that we will be in capable hands as Karen and David now serve as Ministers of Camping and Conferences at Camp Wightman. We anticipate handbell camp to be held in August of 2010 and will keep you all posted as plans progress.

I look forward to seeing many of you very soon at Festival/Conference—get packing! 

Sue Henderson, Area I Chair

AGEHR AREA I OFFICERS

Elected Officers

Chair: **Sue Henderson** (978-851-3024)
chair@agehrarea1.org
Chair-Elect: **Patrick Gagnon** (978-851-0513)
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National Liaisons

Education: **Griff Gall**
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Special Needs: **Jeanne Polcari**
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Appointed Officers

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Atlantic Provinces (Canadian) **To Be Announced**
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Connecticut **Greg Fisher** (860-647-1470)
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Maine **Brian Wilson** (207-781-5880)
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Massachusetts **David Wurth** (978-745-7387)
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New Hampshire **Joan Fossum** (603-224-0866)
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Rhode Island **Gayle Keinard, Sec., Rhode Island Handbell Advisory Board**
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Vermont **Jerilyn Bergdahl** (802-425-2177)
vtchair@agehrarea1.org

Announcing

our 10th Annual

AGEHR, Area-I, Inc.



High School Ring Out 2009

FEATURING: Nationally recognized clinician/composer **Tim Waugh**
and *your high school ringers !!*

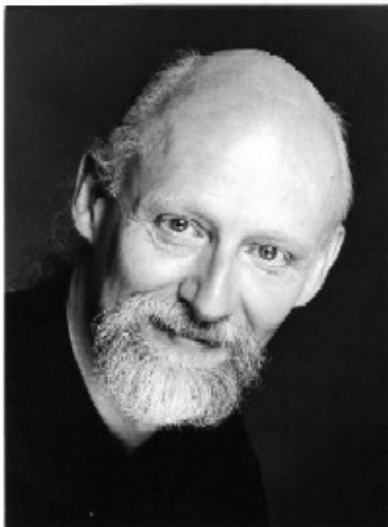
WHEN: Saturday, **November 14**, 2009

WHERE: Wachusett Regional High School, Holden, MA

COST: \$20 per ringing participant

DETAILS: Repertoire, schedule and other details will be published in the August Fundamental Tone and at www.agehrarea1.org If you would like details as soon as they are available in mid-May, e-mail Phil Brown, HSRO registrar at stjmusic@sover.net and ask to be added to the HSRO e-mail list.

AGEHR Area I Board sponsors this event so we can bring in a nationally known director and offer our high school ringers an exceptional learning experience.



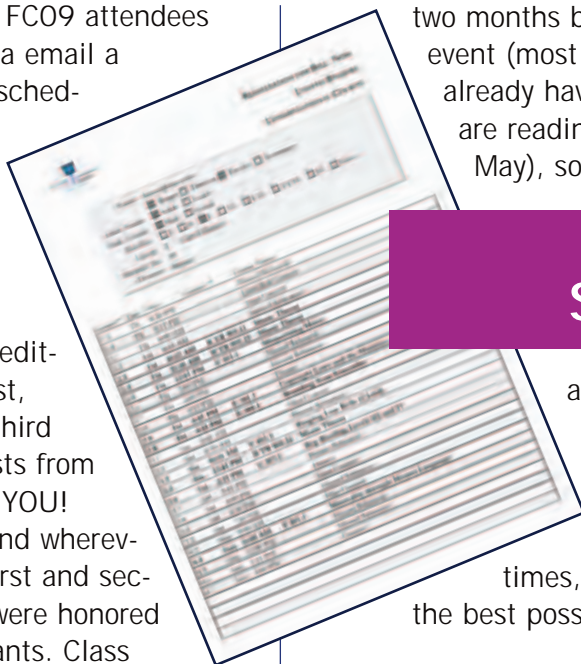
Tim Waugh *"brings to the manuscript, podium, stage and classroom an energy and vitality that seems to ensure the success of performers of every age and ability."* Known nationally and internationally to performers of many mediums including choral, handbells, theatre and church, Tim has established himself as a tireless champion for performing arts of all types. Serving since 1994 as Chair of the Department of Music and the Division of Fine Arts at PikeView High School, he directs choral, musical theatre, and handbell activities in a public education setting. He is in his 33rd year as a public school educator and is looking forward to April Fools Day 2009 when he can explore retirement options and alternate parallel careers.

Don't miss our 10th Anniversary celebration. Your youth ringers will thank you for putting the 2009 High School Ring-Out on their calendars now!

FC'09 Information

All registered FC09 attendees will receive via email a personalized schedule for this event.

Please know that this schedule was painstakingly checked and edited against first, second, and third course requests from the Handbell YOU! curriculum, and wherever possible, first and second choices were honored for all registrants. Class caps have been increased to accommodate more participants in popular courses. Also, you will have your schedule more than



two months before the event (most of you already have it if you are reading this in May), so you will be


trust you all will attend the classes on your schedule and have an amazing musical, academic, and social experience. Any class that you might miss

Your Personalized Schedule For FC09!

able to plan your days, your meals, your rest times, and have the best possible event!

One very important change at this FC is that we will NOT have a class-card swap board. And we will not even have any cards! I

will surely be offered again at future Area I events, and I guarantee that you will take away lots of knowledge from all course offerings at FC09.

I'm so excited to hear the music, witness the learning, and share in the fellowship at Festival/Conference 2009! 
Patrick Gagnon, Area I Chair-Elect, and Festival '09 Chair

Bradford Scholarship Recipients

Congratulations to

Sanctus Bells/Tower Ringers

Laconia, NH; Brenda Bouton, Director

Bell Choir of Bristol Baptist Church

Bristol, CT; William Degan, Director

St. Christopher Handbell Choir

Nashua, NH; Jeanne Polcari, Director

Penobscot Bay Ringers

Rockport, ME; Richard Einsele, Director


Northern Bronze

Burlington, VT; Jerilyn Bergdahl, Director

All are attending Area I's Festival/Conference for the first time!

WiFi Available at FC'09!



Wireless internet access will be available for all FC09 attendees at the University of Maine at Orono. Each registration packet will have information about how to log on, and will have information about UMaine's acceptable use policy for technology. One VERY important thing to disable on your system is any type of FILE SHARING PROGRAM which is strictly prohibited by the university. For more specific details, please email Patrick Gagnon at [<PGa1820@aol.com>](mailto:PGa1820@aol.com), or see the posting on the FC'09 Facebook Page. You can find a link to the Facebook page at the Area I Website (www.agehrea1.org/Festival). 

FESTIVAL CONFERENCE REMINDER!

It is the responsibility of each group coming to FC09 to purchase enough copies of each piece for the complement of ringers present. For example, a five-octave choir with 13 ringers would most likely ring off of seven or eight music stands, with an additional copy for the conductor. AGEHR strictly adheres to all copyright laws, and since FC09 is an AGEHR event, we MUST adhere to this one. A general rule about questions in this field would be "if you have to ask whether it is illegal to copy the music, then it is illegal to

copy the music." Printed music is a consumable commodity, and must be purchased for use, then repurchased when it is worn, lost, damaged, or when more copies are needed.

The full list of FC09 repertoire is available in past editions of the *Fundamental Tone* and also on the Area I website: <http://www.agehrarea1.org/Festival>. You can also find rehearsal notes from Monica McGowan and William Griffin, massed and divisional conductors. Link to your division (Tins, Coppers, Bronze, Massed)

to see these notes, AND to listen to recordings of each piece.

If you have not yet performed all of this music, or have not started rehearsing it, or have not even ordered this music, I strongly encourage you to do all of the above! Handbell music can be purchased from Jeffers Handbell Supply (www.handbellworld.com, 1-800-JHS-BELL), Handbell Services (www.handbellservices.com, 1-800-37BELLS), or J.W. Pepper and Sons (www.jwpepper.com, 1-800-345-6296). See you in June! 🗡️

The A Bronze Ambassadors

In Concert with Special Guests

Karen James
Handbell Soloist

Kevin McChesney
Composer & Director

**Sunday,
June 14, 2009**
at 3:00 p.m.

First United Methodist Church
21 Buell Street, Burlington, Vermont



A free-will offering will be taken to defray travel expenses for their upcoming appearance in Tucson, Arizona.

Performance Anxiety

by Valerie W. Stephenson

Share This Article with Your Fellow Ringers

The following article is the first of two that appeared in the February and May 2008 Castings, Area IV's newsletter. The articles were written by Valerie W. Stephenson, composer and clinician. Valerie is also Florida State Chair, and loves Area I. "Area I gave me my first chance at festival conducting, for which I am forever grateful."

Have you ever had any of the following happen during a performance?

- The piece is going along nicely. *You miss a note. You stop playing.* A form of catatonia takes over and not another note is played for the rest of the piece.
- The piece is going along nicely. *A note in a run is played late.* You and some of your fellow ringers follow that lateness (instead of the director) and the whole piece falls apart.
- You pick up a wrong bell. *Blush.* And play that wrong bell for the next 41 measures.
- *You lose your place for a beat* and stay lost for the rest of the piece.
- The director gives the down-beat and no one comes in... *TWICE!*
- *You're so afraid you're going to mess up that you fulfill your own prophecy.*

All of the preceding has happened to many ringers. Most recover from them all to go on to successful performances, but not

without confronting the reasons and coming up with solutions. They were all caused by performance anxiety, a.k.a. FEAR! Fear

“Fear has no place in your ringing life and must be dealt with before you perform.”

has no place in your ringing life and must be dealt with before you perform. The following are some things you, the ringer, may do before the performance occurs.

1. Practice, practice, practice.

There is no substitute for repetition of your part. Good ringing is the process of training muscle memory to the point where the muscles take over when the brain goes into shock. If your director cannot repeat the piece enough times for you, then YOU DO IT, on your own. Ask to borrow

your bells, or take your music home and set out some utensils in the order of your bells and go to it. You do not need other ringers around you to get your part. In fact, you will be a stronger ringer for throwing away that dependency.

Count out loud while you practice. Count silently in rehearsal when you get close to performance.

2. Cultivate a performance attitude during practice.

Too many times I have heard students say, “but I did it perfectly at home or in practice.” I doubt it. We tend to take a more relaxed attitude using a non-critical ear in practice, knowing that we can do it again if we mess up. It is hard to maintain 100% performance energy level all through a rehearsal. But if you strive for that, the number of repetitions is greatly reduced. Put the demands of the music above all else. Save the pictures of the children, the best restaurant in town and your bursitis for well before or after rehearsal and your ringing will instantly
(continued on next page)

improve. Try to behave in rehearsal the way you would in performance.

Next time you make a mistake in the music, try to go on at all costs. If the director doesn't stop, you shouldn't either. Don't fuss and fume. Just go on. It's good practice for the performance because you may make a mistake there too. When you make a mistake, make a mental note of the problem area. Request a repeat of that section, or work it out at home.

The Carnegie Concept proposes that "every rehearsal is a performance and every performance is just another

rehearsal." If you adopt this attitude, your rehearsals will be more efficient and your performance will be more relaxed. Find that balancing point and work to maintain it.

3. Mark the "fractures" in your part carefully and master them. There are always places in the music that are harder for you than for the other ringers. Approach these places like a broken bone in your body. If your leg were in a cast for months, you would have to exercise it diligently to bring the muscles up to the level of the other leg. You also wouldn't expect nine family members to exercise

with you. So do the same with your music. Mark off the passages that are difficult (fractured) and practice them patiently, intelligently, and relentlessly until they are the strongest passages in the piece. These passages usually occur where there are rapid bell changes, fast changes in techniques, or complicated rhythms. Amazingly, your fear of that spot will turn to joyful anticipation.

4. Practice page turns. Oops! You were playing "O Be Joyful" and now you're playing "O Jesus, I Have Promised!" Arrgh!@#\$.
(continued on next page)



Good Vibrations

NER Spring '09 Tour

Would your organization like to present an NER concert? Contact us at newenglandrings@aol.com, or call at 978-851-3024. Host venues are currently being sought in New England for the 2009 and 2010 Seasons.

May 1, 7:30 p.m.
First Baptist Church
Worcester, MA

May 2, 8:00 p.m.
St. Paul's Episcopal Church
Pawtucket, RI

May 3, 4:00 p.m.
Falmouth Congregational
Church UCC, Falmouth, ME

May 19, 8:00 p.m.
Boston Handbell Festival
Old South Church, Boston

May 30, 7:00 p.m.
South Congregational Church
Springfield, MA

May 31, 7:30 p.m.
United Methodist Church
Hadley, MA



June 6, 7:00 p.m.
First Congregational
Church, Branford, CT

June 7, 6:30 p.m.
First United Methodist
Church, Greenfield, MA

August 9, 7:30 p.m.
Ocean Park
Music Festival
Ocean Park, ME

PERFORMANCE ANXIETY...

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What happened? Though an incident like this may occur in the best of plans, you can minimize the special problems that page turns present. *If you are sharing music your problems are reduced by half.* Simply mark the initials of the person who will turn the page. It may differ from page to page according to the dictates of the music, so don't trust your memory on this one. Plan diligently for the turn and make it part of the musical whole, right down to the beat you reach for the turn.

If necessary (and it usually is), *memorize the measures* before or after a page turn to execute an early or late turn. Don't doubt yourself. You can memorize bell music. Don't curse the editors. No, they don't stay up nights devising the most impossible spot for a turn, though it may seem that way at times. Impossible page turns don't usually occur for all ringers at once.

5. Develop strategies for recovery. Most non-professional ringers (and perhaps some pros too) get lost occasionally. If you do not have the musical training to confidently relocate yourself in the music, you need a plan.

If your mistake has not totally confounded you, simply stop ringing for that measure (or two). Watch the director and come back in on the next downbeat. *It is far better to stop ringing briefly than to stumble along blindly hoping to fall back into the proper place.* Everyone around you may get confused.

If your mistake has caused a lack of focus on the page and you simply don't know where you are, gently elbow a neighbor for help. That signals to them what they probably already know—you are lost! If you are sharing music, the
(continued on next page)

Keep Your Handbells Looking and Playing Their Best!

Simichrome® Polish

Restore that "new" look to your bells with Simichrome Polish, recommended by handbell manufacturers. Apply the ammonia-based polish to the bell surface with a soft cotton cloth (our cleaning cloths are perfect for this). Spread the polish evenly with a circular motion, then wipe off. This polish oxidizes tarnish and restores the original luster to the bells.

1102	50 gram tube	\$10.55
1103	250 gram can	\$31.75
1104	1000 gram can	\$77.30



Cape Cod® Metal Polishing Cloths

Use these treated cotton cloths to polish bronze castings quickly and easily. Safe for most metals, these cloths also protect by leaving an invisible layer of anti-tarnish protection. Each packet contains two 4" x 6" moistened polishing cloths in a reclosable foil pouch. The collector's tin of six 6" x 10" cloths includes one pair of nitrite gloves.



1108	Package of 2 Cloths	\$4.50
1109	Tin of 6 Cloths w/Gloves	\$16.95

Jeffers Handbell Supply, Inc.

For All of Your Handbell and Handchime Needs,

1-800-JHS-BELL
www.HandbellWorld.com

Cloths for Polishing

After each rehearsal, use these cloths to clean your bells. Inner red cloth has jeweler's rouge embedded in the cloth for cleaning. The outer buffing cloth wipes away the rouge and light tarnish.



1001	Polishing Cloth	\$3.00
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Polishing cloths may cause staining of gloves or covers. Use with caution.

Cleaning Cloths

Not pictured. Use one cloth to apply the polish to the bell casting. Remove the polish with a second cloth. A third cloth picks up any remaining residue. The lint-free interlocking knit does not unravel. Cloths may be washed and reused, but each washing reduces absorbency.

1011	4 oz. package	\$3.95
1014	16 oz. package	\$11.95

Maybe It's Time for More than Just Polish!

Just like any musical instrument, handbells play and sound better when they are properly maintained. Part of this maintenance should include regular servicing by trained professional technicians. Call us at 1-800-JHS-BELL to find out more about our Handbell Service Department or to schedule an appointment.

helper should point directly to where you are in the music. If that person is ringing an active passage, they should whisper the measure number. Whispering the next measure number is even better, since the measure you are in will be gone by the time you find it. If necessary, the helper should begin softly chanting the beats, with beat #1 being the measure number—i.e., 24–2–3–4, 25–2–3–4. Though chanting is not the ideal obbligato to the music, it is better than missing the rest of the piece. If your neighbor is “off” and they don’t appear to know it, don’t elbow them, but begin to count softly or point to where they should be.

Whatever happens, don’t let being lost cause excessive fear. That only insures that you will remain lost. Keep a

sense of perspective and maintain your sense of humor. Hopefully, your director will too.

Okay. You have practiced, counted, planned, rehearsed and feel confident that you have taught your muscles almost all they need to know. The next issue will deal with the weeks right before performance and the big day itself. Remember, the most important thing is to enjoy the process and create beautiful music. 🖋️

Editor’s Note: I remember reading this article last year and the feeling I had when Valerie recalled exactly all those things that happened to me when I began ringing (and still can happen). And I found some good advice: *Treat every practice as a performance.* Group rehearsal is not the time to figure out why

Next Article on Performance Anxiety:

What to do leading up to and just before the concert!

you missed that note or you got lost—keep going; find your place. Reading further, I recalled the advice of my piano teacher, who said that the only way not to feel nervous was to make sure you were well-rehearsed. Play the hard parts over and over until they are second nature. At my piano recital, he forgot to mention that any mistakes will be in little places where you never made a mistake before. I’m thankful: something less to think about! But I whizzed right through the hard parts, just as I knew I would.—bn

REPORT FROM MAINE

Handbell ringing is alive and growing in the State of Maine! We had a very successful **Spring Ring** on March 28th with nearly 100 ringers in attendance under the fantastic direction of Dan Moore and Ray Cornils. To promote the ring, **Towne Lyne Ringers** of Falmouth appeared on the television show 207 on Channel 6.

New England Ringers will be performing May 3rd at Falmouth Congregational Church and at The Temple at Ocean Park on August 3. *Good Vibrations* is the theme for their concerts and is the title of one of the songs (yes, from the Beach Boys) they will perform.



Our newly formed community group, **Casco Bay Ringers**, has rehearsed several times and is preparing for their fall Christmas concert debut. Please stay tuned for details! Our other community group, **Penobscot Bay Ringers**, have been busily preparing for a concert on May 2nd, 2009. They will join four other local choirs in presenting “Let the Bells Ring” at Second Congregational Church in Warren.

The main item on the menu, of course, is **Festival/Conference 2009**, which will be held at University of Maine at Orono. Please check the Area I website for all the details!

Plans are underway for the **Fall Skill Building Workshop** to be held in October. Please check back for details. 🖋️ *Brian Wilson, Maine State Chair*

REPORT FROM MASSACHUSETTS



In March, the annual **Massachusetts Spring Ring** was attended by 225 ringers. Many thanks to Karen Leonard and Ed Henderson for their direction. There was an “Orphanage” for the first time. If you wanted to ring and your choir was not attending, you could play at the “Orphanage.” This was a great experience for all that participated. I saw a couple of directors and some other folks that just came to help with the event jump in and ring, most of all to just have Fun. I plan on an “Orphanage” next year at the Mass Spring Ring. Stop by and give it a try. It is a great way to meet other ringers.

On May 2nd, **Kiriku**, from Japan, is coming to The Hancock Church in Lexington. This is an incredible “Team of 6 Musicians.” This is a chance Massachusetts will not have again for a long time. Run, do not walk, to see them.


May 4th is one of my favorite events of the year, **The Highlands Handbell Festival** in Danvers at the Highland School. It is awesome to see the future of the art of handbell ringing on the North Shore at this event. **Back Bay Ringers** and **Merrimack Valley Ringers** join the **Chime Choir of the Highland School**, and the handbell choir of **Trinity Church, Danvers**.

May 19th is the **Boston Handbell Festival**, at this annual event **The Back Bay Carillon, The Back Bay Ringers, Merrimack Valley Ringers, New England Ringers, Old South Ringers** and the **Ringers from The Hancock Church** join forces to raise funds to donate a set of Choirchimes® to a local school.


May and June are busy time for all of our local choirs. You don't have to look far to take in a night of great entertainment. Just leave enough time to practice for Festival/Conference in Orono, Maine! 🗡️


David Wurth, Massachusetts State Chair

Save the date for the 3rd annual
BOSTON HANDBELL FESTIVAL
TUESDAY, MAY 19, 2009 AT 8:00 PM
OLD SOUTH CHURCH, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS



Event co-sponsored by:

 **back bay ringers**
www.backbayringers.org

 **Old South Church**
www.oldsouth.org

Workshop with Composer Cathy Moglebust June 6, 2009



The Back Bay Ringers, Boston's leading community-based handbell organization, will offer a day of workshops and performances featuring renowned handbell composer Cathy Moglebust, Saturday, June 6, 2009. The workshop will be held at Boston University's College of Fine Arts and is designed to appeal to ringers and directors at all levels and will allow these musicians to interact with Ms. Moglebust throughout the day-long, hands-on workshop. Registration fee for the day-long event is \$45. Registration is now open—workshop information and registration materials are available at www.backbayringers.org/bbrworkshop.html. 🗡️

Thoughts for Festival

How does one survive a full day of rehearsals and still have energy for the final concert?

What Contributes to Tension, Fatigue and Discomfort While Ringing?

- **Forgetting to breathe** (When we concentrate or work hard at something, we tend to hold our breath; lactic acid and carbon dioxide builds up.) If you are ringing late or having difficulty with control of dynamics, remember to breathe.
- **Lack of muscle balance** (If the muscles on one side of a joint are stronger than the other side, it becomes more difficult to move smoothly and accurately.) Begin conditioning exercises now to improve that muscle balance.
- **Posture** (Poor posture can make it harder to breathe properly, and can add to muscle fatigue and discomfort). Begin conditioning and balance activities now. Use warm-up and posture exercises during breaks throughout the day.

- **Inadequate use of body mechanics while ringing** (Using our body inefficiently leads to muscle fatigue, tension and strain). Learn about body mechanics now and practice use of the principles while preparing for festival.
- **Pre-existing conditions** (As our bodies compensate for pre-existing conditions such as tendonitis, arthritis, injuries, tension and strain is placed on other muscles and body structures). Ask your health care professional about ways to minimize the impact.
- **Pre-ringing activities** (Tension is cumulative. Any tension resulting from your drive and/or the moving and setting up of equipment will pre-dispose you to more tension as you ring). Be sure to engage in relaxation exercises and activities to reduce the impact of anything that has occurred prior to ringing. 🛠️ — Nancy Reynolds, Past Chair

REPORT FROM VERMONT

In one week, Apr. 25, Vermont ringers will experience the joy of “**Granite Rocks and Rings**,” the official name for the **28th Annual Vermont Spring Ring** to be held in Barre, Vermont. Planning began a year in advance; committee members worked from a Yearly Planning Calendar developed, revised, and improved each year for the past 15 years. The Planning Calendar is a valuable asset for committee members with already busy schedules, because a huge task is now divided into manageable monthly tasks. Nonetheless, this committee and committees in the past have done a fantastic job of making each Spring Ring unique and their own; i.e., the name “Granite Rocks and Rings” references the famous Barre granite quarries. Our clinician this year is Jane Anderson from Topeka, KS. The repertoire for Massed ringing is: “Allegro Spiritoso” by Greg Underwood, “Celebration” by Fred Gramann, “Grace and Thanksgiving” by Anna Laura Page, and “Fiesta con Campanillas” by Carol Lynn Mizell. Classes include a Reading Session, Skill Building, Beginning and Advanced Four-in-Hand, Relaxation and Massage Techniques, and Conducting Techniques. Friday night, April 24,



thirteen directors will gather for the annual Directors’ Workshop. The evening begins with dinner and then Jane Anderson will lead a class entitled “Essential Elements to Success,” which consists of a presentation of the seven elements that will enable your bell program to succeed.

Two **Think Spring Ring** mini-rings were held recently, one in St. Johnsbury, VT, hosted by Phil Brown, and the other in Essex Jct., VT, hosted by **Northern Bronze** community ensemble, and attracted nearly 70 ringers. The events give directors a chance to direct larger groups in an informal learning environment, and the ringers a chance to learn repertoire with another director. These half-day events continue to draw more and more interest.

Three handbell ensembles that had been inactive for quite a few years have re-started; another group is in the process of starting in Vermont. It is such a pleasure to interact with these new groups and see their sense of accomplishment as they begin rehearsals. More about their stories in future articles.

On July 8, Vermont directors will gather to plan another year at the annual summer meeting. 🛠️
Jerilyn Bergdahl, Vermont State Chair

The Beginnings of St. Christopher Special Friends Handbell Choir

*This is the second article in a series about a special needs group of adult handbell ringers in Nashua, NH: the **Special Friends Handbell Choir**. The last article summarized the steps taken to bring our group together as well as my motivation and interest in exploring its possibilities.*

First Rehearsal

Wondering how we got from our first practice in the spring of '08 to our current position of rehearsing for our first concert next month, I looked over the notes I had jotted down before our first rehearsal which reflected four areas of thought that first tentative weekend last year.

1. What was my objective? What routines would work? What were the rules?
2. How was I going to ensure their attention, keeping them engaged and motivated?
3. Would I convince them their contributions were valuable?
4. Would we have fun?

As introductions were made that first day, we all put on name tags and fit and labeled gloves, which would be kept in individually marked plastic bags. (This minimal routine became a revered task.) Everyone seemed eager, curious, and ready to begin.



I started by simply saying to handle the bells carefully—if they were damaged we couldn't play them; and we were using the bells to make music together. From that point on, language quickly got in the way. The typical visual explanation of ringing technique we all use—that of pedaling a bike backwards—did not register as I thought it would. I realized many special needs adults have depth perception

challenges and wouldn't relate to a bicycle. I had to explain things in many different ways, and more concrete explanations worked better. Often the solution came from one of the group..."oh, you want us to scoop!" These kind of revelations that they gave to me quickly took care of #4...it was great to laugh together!

We did a stretching routine and simple rhythm exercises with mallets on bells. It got them moving and made rhythmic sounds, providing a break from the ringing technique motions before anyone got discouraged or tired.

In addition to the variety of levels of functioning and abilities to process instruction, there were some physical limitations, including difficulty in maneuvering bell position changes at the table and some restricted arm use. I found physical adaptations were easier to accommodate; we attached bells to hands with Velcro and adjusted bell assignments for consistency as needed.

The
**Glove
Tree**

Please look for the Area I **Glove Tree** at upcoming spring events. The **Glove Tree** has black, white, & tie-dyed gloves in various sizes available. Directors can save shipping costs by purchasing gloves for their choir through the **Glove Tree**. Checks are accepted made payable to AGEHR Area I. If you have any questions about the **Glove Tree**, please contact Pam Sturdevant at store@agehrarea1.org.

The more difficult challenges were due to delayed response times. Having us all play together or play a bell exactly when I pointed to them continues to take ongoing practice...and some rehearsals are more precise than others, like with all groups.

What worked best initially were pieces done with two or three chords for accompaniment and simple melody lines within an octave that could be played by direction while we sang. Our first pieces with chords were *Kumbayah* and *He's Got the Whole World*, as I had earlier asked a member what she

thought the group would love to learn. Both continue to be favorites. *This Little Light of Mine* and *Michael Row Your Boat Ashore* worked well with single melody note bell ringing. Even now, as the group has learned to follow score, bells in both hands work just for chordal accompaniments.

Even though retention is sporadic, when it is good, they know it! The experience of playing, hearing and prompt feedback continues to adjust the level of musicality better than instruction, explanations and drills.

Of course, an objective remains to inspire an appreciation of music and handbell ringing, but observations have much to do with group process; how is this activity impacting individuals; what characteristics of development are they exhibiting...are they consistent with groups without such challenges; how are they benefiting from working in a music group? I'll share my comments about this in the next article. ✎

Jeanne Polcari is Area I's Special Needs Liaison and Director of St. Christopher Special Friends Handbell Choir in Nashua, NH.



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Please welcome our newest members to Area I

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Susan Kenny
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Orchard Christian Fellowship
Londonderry, NH

Four Winds Community Church
Temple, NH

Wachusett Regional High School
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