



nela music
ASSOCIATION

2024 Annual Report

Message from the President/Founder Myra Gatling-Akers

The NELA Music Awards was founded in 2015 to celebrate the exceptional talent in Northeast Louisiana. Before then, these artists had few opportunities to gain recognition or showcase their talent on a larger scale. What started as an awards program has since evolved into a comprehensive effort to market Northeast Louisiana as a thriving music hub. The music industry plays a vital role in our region and state, and we take great pride in our talented artists and the dedicated volunteers, and supporting partners who make our mission possible. We are proud of our efforts and the people that have made them happen.

This year, we formed a new 501c3 nonprofit (NELA Music Association) to focus on our music initiative, and we are excited about 2025. If you are interested in working toward our mission, please get in touch.

Executive Committee

President, Myra Gatling-Akers
Vice President, Ross Slacks
Secretary, Celeste Heisler
Treasurer, Melinda Hill-Floyd

Board of Directors

Gwen Amelin
Gaye Auger-Laing
Jayne Smith-Green
Johnna Utzman
Tom Malmay

Committees

Steering Committee

Myra Gatling-Akers
Gwen Amelin

Mike Downhour
Melinda Hill-Floyd
Tom Malmay

Ross Slacks
Johnna Utzman

Marketing Committee

Myra Gatling-Akers
Genevieve Alexander
Santoria Black
Bill Blackwell
Ashley Dowling

Tom Faber
Rick Godley
Dave Gore
Averyal Goyne
Toshia Laing
Mitch Laing

Tom Malmay
Sujan Mangarati
Kaitlyn Moore
Hollis Walker
Johnna Utzman
Gray Vickers

NELA Music Awards Show Committee

Genevieve Alexander
Gwen Amelin
Brittani Audirsch
Ashley Dowling

Melinda Hill-Floyd
Averyal Goyne
Celeste Heisler
Lori Jones
Gaye Auger-Laing
Johnna Utzman

Jayne Smith-Green
Ross Slacks
Dana Evans Vickers
Gray Vickers

Advisory Committee

Jay Waalk, Chairman
Tom Malmay, Co-Chairman (W Monroe)
Myra Gatling-Akers (Monroe)
Brad Akers (Monroe)
Jordan Alexander
Santoria Black (Ruston)
Al Cherry
Mike Downhour (Calhoun)
Tom Faber (Ruston)
Melinda Hill-Floyd (Farmerville)
Rick Godley (Ruston)
Dave Gore
Don Head
Curtis Hilbun (Winnsboro)
Adam Holland (Oak Grove)

Missy Hutchins
Clay LaBeff
Josh Love
Scott Oglesbee
Big Po
Chris Rabe
Clara Rae
Ross Slacks (Monroe)
Matt Shepard (Monroe)
Jordan Sheppard
Mark Taylor (Bastrop)
Johnna Utzman (Columbia)
Danny Lee Witherington (Columbia)
DJ Worm

Who We Are

Purpose: To recognize and celebrate the diverse musical talent in northeast Louisiana. Our platform showcases musicians, songwriters, and other music industry professionals and contributes to the growth and recognition of the Northeast Louisiana music scene.

Mission: To showcase the musical talent in NELA and market it as a music destination.

Vision: To establish Northeast Louisiana as a destination hub for music enthusiasts and foster participation in musical arts.

Goal: To elevate awareness and appreciation for live music by featuring a diverse range of performances and promoting the region's unique musical heritage.

Service area: 12 parishes, including Caldwell, East Carroll, Franklin, Jackson, Lincoln, Madison, Morehouse, Ouachita, Richland, Tensas, Union, and West Carroll.

Objective: Collaborate with restaurants and nightclubs to promote artists and businesses through marketing campaigns. Host NELA Music Awards to highlight the region's exceptional talent.

Louisiana Music Tourism Info

As of 2022, recreation and entertainment account for 2.6 billion dollars of visitor spending to Louisiana's economy (this includes visitor spending within the arts, recreation, and entertainment). Travel parties visiting Louisiana are 2.2 times more likely to participate in Live Music than parties traveling to the average US destination. By fostering music tourism, we can create a positive and lasting impression of our state's indelible role in shaping American popular music. Music is consumed more than any other art form. (According to the Louisiana Tourism Economic Impact 2022 and 2021 Louisiana Tourism Visitor Profile)

2024

Goal: Host the NELA Music Awards to showcase and recognize the incredible talent in our region.

2024 Accomplishments

- Updated **nelamusicawards.com** with awards and resource information.
- Added the **Art Reception** to showcase regional artists.
- Added a music exhibit from the **BB King Museum & Delta Interpretive Center**
- Featured live painting by artist **Gaye Auger-Laing**, Co-host **Kix Brooks** signed the artwork. We auctioned off the artwork for auction. Prints were also created to give to sponsors.
- Acquired **Briana Calhoun, Chancie Neal, Kix Brooks, and Mark Taylor** as award co-hosts.
- Established a new **Humanitarian Award**, honoring Briana Calhoun for “Hope on the Inside” project.
- Showcased **12 music acts** and numerous industry professionals as presenters and nominees.
- Hosted our first **Nominee Release Party** at Flying Heart Brewing, inducting artists into the NELA Music Hall of Fame, and presenting Lifetime Achievement Awards, and other awards.
- Recognized **33 artists** with awards.
- Expanded sponsorship efforts, enhancing production quality with volunteer Melissa Hill-Floyd.
- Partnered with Wayne Gentry and his team at Showcase Productions to produce the show.
- Partnered with **Air Recording to operate video walls** elevating the show.
- We remembered those we lost in the music industry during the **In Memoriam**.
- **Lt. Governor Billy Nungesser** provided a video encouraging our efforts.
- Honored **James Burton** for his contributions to music.

Goal: To market northeast Louisiana to be recognized as a destination hub for music enthusiasts.

2024 Accomplishments

- Launched **We've Got the Music in NELA** campaign.
- Developed a paper on the importance of music
- Expanded social media (**Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube**)
- Members of Monroe Chamber of Commerce, West Monroe West Ouachita Chamber of Commerce, Northeast Louisiana Art Council, and Ouachita River Blues Society to expand education.
- Began using hashtags #nelamusic #nelamusicscene #nelamusicawards
- Acquired **Johnna Utzman** as our social media coordinator, significantly expanding our marketing efforts.
- Expanded our reach by adding volunteers from **Ruston, Farmerville and other areas**.
- Tom Malmay spoke at Rotary, Kiwanis and Ambassador's Club about the organization, award show, and the importance of music to the region.
- Maintained the NELA Music Hall of Fame.
- Donated \$1000 to the Hoss Logan marker on the Northeast Louisiana Music Trail.

Goal: To market the musical talent of NELA and the live music venues.

2024 Accomplishments

- Created a **musicians' registry** with their booking information.
- Launched a weekly live music **texting service** for subscribers to know where they can find live music.
- Expanded our **social media** to include Instagram and TikTok to expand exposure.
- Introduced "NELA Music Scene" on Louisiana Living on KTVE to promote this week's music appearances with Tom Malmay.
- Partnered with Oak Grove with KWCL-96.7 FM for weekly updates with Tom Malmay and Adam Holland.
- Introduced video updates on where to find live music.
- Introduced videos and performance reviews by our staff writers Melinda Hill-Floyd and Tom Malmay.
- Dave Gore hosted a radio segment on two Peach Radio stations promoting live music venues and performances.

Thanks to our partners

3 Bridges Productions
Albritton Photography
Allegiance Health Management
ARCO
B & E Wholesale
BB King Museum & Delta Interpretive Center
Blue Cross Blue Shield
Brookshire's
Burns & Wilcox
Capital Premium
Cavendar's Boot City
Choice Brands
City of Monroe
Clawdaddy's Crawfish & Oyster Bar
Darbonne Healthcare Clinic
Divine Wine & Keg Packaging
Erik Mart-Rod Marketing + Design
Flying Heart Brewing & Pub
Glenn Northcott
Godley Works Advertising & Marketing
Global Insurance Group
Guidry's Catfish
Guardian Health Clinic
Harvest Foods
Holland Broadcasting
Homeland Bank
International Wine & Spirits
Jim Taylor Auto Group
Johnny's Pizza House
KARD FOX 14
KEDM
KTVE NBC 10
Landry Vineyards
Lazenby & Associates
Louisiana Seafood
Mac's Fresh Market
Magic Grill
Malmay & Associates

Matt's Music
Monaco
Monroe Chamber of Commerce
Newk's Eatery
Northeast Delta Human Services Authority
Northeast Louisiana Delta African American Heritage Museum
North Louisiana Medical Center
Origin Bank
Peregrine Creative
Red Peach Radio
Richland Arts Council
RG Lighting
Ruston Daily Leader
Sanctuary Quartet
SE Huey
Senator Jay Morris
Silmon Wholesale
Skent N Dent
Sidelines Sport Lounge
Sir Speedy
Showcase Productions
Southern Hospitality Services LLC
State Farm-Peggy Sullivan
Stephens Media Group
Stonetrust Insurance
The Branch & Company
The Stumble Out
Thirsty Farmer
T Mobile
UnitiFiber
Union General Hospital
Voices of the Southland
Watson, McMillian & Street
West Monroe West Ouachita Chamber
Whiskey Row: Mustang Sally, The Siesta, Cooter Bay

