



MUSICENTRAL

AFM Local 660 July 2008
Founded in 1913—Tuned for
the 21st Century



American Federation of Musicians - Local 660

Central PA—A Music Mecca

In this issue...

President Lee's Message
Central PA—A Music Mecca
Olin Butt Scholarship Fund Raiser

Listen to Music
Meet unmet members' needs
Tony's Big Easy
Interview with SOZO

Events—Ads—Dues Matters
Working on Unmet Goals
Friend's Big Band
Gigs in "Voices"

Spotlight on Joe Alessandro

AFM 660 on The Web

John Thompson, Webmaster
<http://www.afm660.org>

AFM 660 Newsletter

John R. Vincenti, Editor

REMINDER

JAZZ PA—JULY 26TH Bellefonte, PA
SOUTH HILLS Picnic-Music Fridays

" If you want to be a doctor, a lawyer you must go to college. But if you want to be a musician or such, study your craft. Study music. "

Billy Eckstine

<http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/b/billyeckst265114.html>

Picture this, a vision for Central Pennsylvania: A music Mecca where you can drop by, tune up and sit in. We may actually be on our way to meet the top unmet musician need identified in the recent survey of local musicians – **"venues where the focus is on listening to live music."**

Club owners respect this need and are ready to join the effort. Managers and/or owners at Tony's Big Easy, the American Ale House, Café 210 and the Brewery have all expressed an interest in hosting AFM 660 "Listen to the Music" events (see accompanying article, page 2). Other club owners will no doubt follow suit.

In fact, the concept has broadened into an enticing vision of developing the State College area into "Pennsylvania's downtown" – a destination for high quality, original, live music. Here are that vision's compelling details:

Stimulated by AFM 660 live music events, audiences come to rely on the State College area and on certain clubs to deliver certain kinds of music on a regular basis. Maybe Café 210 or the Brewery feature excellent rock and blues bands and Tony's or the Ale House feature jazz music on a regular basis. Audiences know that, in general, if you come to the State College Area you will find good, live, original music worth listening to.

This vision has a win-win economic aspect: Club owners realize their stake in the well-being of high quality musicians who draw larger, well-heeled, listening audiences, so they agree to a wage scale that keeps these musicians alive and well. The club owners also know their audiences want to be able to rely on who's playing, so they agree to signed contracts with musicians.

AFM 660 also maintains an up-to-the-minute web site of who is playing where and how to contact local musicians for gigs. Advertising on this web site goes to support local live music.

Musicians come to recognize this area as a happening place, where club owners and audiences respect you and where you can communicate and network with other musicians -- which, by the way, was the second greatest unmet need identified in the musicians' survey. Playing music in this area also becomes a way for musicians to experience professional growth as a musician – another top need identified in the survey.

And while there are State College bars where the focus still is on getting drunk and "getting it on," the predominant character of State College clubs is now transformed to that of a place where audiences come to connect with high quality music played by dedicated and self-actualized top quality, thriving musicians whose music makes people fall in love (and get it on – another unmet need of local musicians, but not a formal topic of the survey).

The vision continues: At the first annual AFM 660 Music Awards Gala, the Chamber of Business and Industry of Centre County gives AFM 660 an award for drawing greater audiences and enhancing Centre County's economy with its "Listen to the Music" initiative.

At the same high-tone awards event, Penn State's President Graham Spanier addresses the glittering audience to acknowledge AFM 660's role in reducing the level of drunkenness in State College.

Dr. Spanier also reports that more national acts are asking to play the Bryce Jordan Center and Eisenhower Auditorium because they find the State College music scene refreshing and they like to sit in at local bars with local musicians after their concerts.

And agents of these national acts get wind of the scene and come along and sign our musicians to recording contracts. We all become rich and famous, move to Los Angeles, develop life-styles we cannot sustain...no, wait, that's *not* part of the vision.

Anyway, does that vision (except for the LA part) work for you? I thought it might.

So what is the first step in that direction? See the accompanying story on our first AFM 660 "Listen to the Music" event at the American Ale House on July 20, from 2 to 5 pm.

All musicians – AFM 660 or not -- are encouraged to drop by, tune up and sit in, or just visit with other musicians and listen to good music -- whatever floats your boat. Rumor has it that piano jazz great Dave McKenna may even join us there to socialize a bit on July 20.

Admission is \$10, but it's free for AFM members and for anyone who signs up for AFM membership on the spot (\$75 one-time initiation fee and \$45 for July-Dec 2008).

Fifty percent of the door on July 20 will go to a good cause -- the AFM 660 Olin Butt Fund for Music Education -- and fifty percent will go to the hard-working musician rhythm section supplying the equipment. What's funny is that, the rhythm section is all past AFM 660 presidents –Andrew Jackson (drums), John Vincenti (keyboards) Chris Byrne (sax), and yours truly (guitar and keyboards). John Kovalchik is the only past president who will be out of town July 20. We'll catch him at the next one. This is live presidents gathering dead presidents (US currency) for a good cause.

So when Sunday, July 20 rolls around, and you are wondering what to do with yourself, drop by, tune up and sit in, and join us in taking the first step together towards accomplishing this new, enticing vision for musical State College.

Keep in touch!

Christopher Lee, President, Email: chris@boalmuseum.com Phone: 814-466-9266



AFM Local 660 includes: All of Huntingdon, Snyder, Union, Centre, Mifflin, Juniata, Union, and Montour Counties. All of Northumberland County except Snyderstown, Shamokin, Ralpho, Zerbe, Little Mahony, Jackson, Herndon, Lower Mahanoy, West Cameron, East Cameron, Mount Carmel, Kulpmont, Marion Heights and Coal. Also all of Columbia County with the exception of Centralia, which is in Local 140 Wilkes-Barre area.

Listen to the Music: AFM is also Listening photos by Debbie Trudeau

Events designed to highlight venues where the focus is on listening to live music and to generate communication among musicians, the top two unmet musician needs...identified in the recent musician survey.



Photos from "Listen to the Music" sponsored by the AFM 660 to promote live music at Tony's Big Easy on June 13, 2008. Drew Jackson and Chris Lee were announcers that evening. The event included the Jackson Band including Ron Lange on bass, Adam Kurland on keyboard, and Carl Ector on violin. The band quickly warmed up the receptive crowd. Guest performers sitting in included Stacey (Glen) Tibbetts on vocals, Tom Connelly on drums, and Chris Lee on keyboards. Deb Trudeau said, "It was a pleasant evening and the first of many more to come!"



AFM 660 President Chris Lee chats with SOZO venue manager Will Snyder. Snyder and Lee are planning an AFM 660 music performance with socializing and pot-luck meal at SOZO on East Beaver Avenue. The event also may include a general membership meeting, since three meetings per year are required by the national AFM bylaws. Below is an interview with Will Snyder III and Chris Lee.

Lee: Tells us about SOZO.

Snyder: SOZO is located at 256 E. Beaver Ave. in downtown State College, we're a non-smoking storefront, black-box-theatre venue. We can accommodate 150 people in theatre-style seating, 60 with round tables, or 207 with standing-room only. We now offer a full lighting and sound package, espresso / snack bar, sound man, advance ticket sales, marketing and promotion, technical assistance, and even catering for events. Over the past several months, with the help and advice of some of you, I've been preparing protocol for booking a cabaret series, jazz series, multi-genre showcase series, rock concerts, and other performing arts events, working toward becoming a more established venue in downtown State College.

Lee: AFM is interested in finding new venues for musicians to be heard, can SOZO assist?

Snyder: I understand that AFM 660, as a musician's union, is seeking a listening space, from which to reach a wider audience than what the local bars will draw. At SOZO, I hope to serve you and your fans and establish a viable and accessible creative space and listening room for all the artists in the area. This process will take time.

Lee: Who is SOZO associated with?

Snyder: As a venue, we're fortunate to be backed by Keystone Church and Ministries, Inc, which has provided a base from which to operate, largely by covering our building rent. SOZO Institute of the Arts, a separate financial entity from the church, eventually hopes to become a self-sustaining multi-arts presenting organization. As we work toward becoming a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation, we'll be able to apply for grants and other funding to underwrite the performances and events you can provide. Our largest financial base has been the students and the more than 20 all-ages, rock/indie shows we hosted in 2007, events that we will continue. But we also want to feature cabaret, jazz, and singer-songwriter performances on weekend nights, and we envision the venue being used on weeknights for workshops, lectures, and other showcases for theatre, spoken-word, dance, and visual arts. You can contact Will Snyder III at 814-880-9933 wsnyder@SOZOart.org

Lee: Does SOZO have business limitations?

Snyder: First, although we cannot offer guarantees at this time, we are offering to split all ticket sale revenue with artists. Second, we have been rolling most of our portion of ticket sales back into the venue for advertising, promotion, and physical space improvements, items that will benefit all artists using the space. I'm personally volunteering 90% of the hours that I've worked to book the events at SOZO so far, seeking compensation only for my professional graphic design work. So, I am asking AFM 660 to partner with me and be willing to take some time to build what I know SOZO can become – a wonderful small, intimate venue for phenomenal art happenings. Eventually, we hope to offer the church something to offset the rent through our operations. So we ask AFM 660 members to consider bringing your trio, your pianist, your chamber ensemble, your theatre group, your jazz quartet, or just your songs. We'll partner with you to enhance your image and "create a scene" that all of us can enjoy.



Listen to the Music—American Ale House, July 20th—AFM members please bring snacks

On Sunday afternoon, July 20, AFM 660 presents its first "Listen to the Music" event from 2 to 5 pm at the American Ale House at Tofrees near State College. The smoke-free, all ages event with free snacks features the area's top local musicians and an invitation to all other musicians to come sit in and to the public to come and enjoy music that the performers care about passionately. AFM members are requested to bring a snack to share at event.

The admission fee of \$10 for non-union members will go 50% to the AFM 660 Olin Butt Scholarship Fund for High School Music Education and 50% to the professional musicians who are sharing their equipment and talent for the afternoon. AFM members and families are free. The musicians will play jazz, rock and blues – both old favorites and brand new original music. For details, contact Chris Lee at chris@boalmuseum.com or (814) 466-9266.



Working on Unmet Goals—AFM 660 Treasurer, [Debbie Trudeau](#)

The AFM 660 board recently met and I can report to you that there is much momentum towards the positive goals outlined in the recent musicians survey, including organizing new "Listen to the Music" events designed to bring musicians together and turn the State College area into a music destination and "Pennsylvania's downtown."

The board members and volunteers who give their time to serve local musicians enjoy the fellowship and sense of accomplishment those efforts bring us. We'd be happy to accomplish more and we can with your help and fellowship, so please look over the volunteer opportunities below and consider where you can help join in with AFM 660's "party with a purpose." Together we can advance the cause of music and musicians in central Pennsylvania.

"Listen to the Music" events

General membership meetings social/potluck committee

Membership recruitment

Nominating committee for annual elections

Wage scale study committee

Newsletter article submissions by 20th of month



News—Events—Ads—Dues Matters

Music at Friends Big Band & Vocalist by Catherine Dupuis & Don Keat

The Friends Big Band was born out of the dreams of Catherine Dupuis and Joe Alessandro. In their dreaming and scheming during the early spring of 2005, Joe suggested to Catherine that it would be great to have her come home to sing with a big band made up of the best Central Pennsylvania musicians. The venue would be a jazz festival located somewhere in State College. Catherine, being a dream maker, picked up on the idea and made it a reality by collaborating with the State College Area School District (SCASD) to help support the Extracurricular Endowment Fund. That fund is now fully endowed.

With a date set in July of 2005, Joe provided a list of suggested musicians to play in the Friends Big Band, turning this list over to Don Keat who still serves as the band contractor. As Don called to check on interest and availability, everyone (with one exception due to job restraints) was available. Don followed up with an email to these musicians which said that thanks to the Herculean efforts of our First Lady of Song, Catherine Dupuis, and the advice/encouragement of Joe Alessandro, we were ready to launch into this wonderful event of having an annual summer jazz festival in State College.

The July 2005 festival took place on a Saturday afternoon at the South Hills School Stage. The next year, the event grew to two days and was staged in downtown State College at the Central Parklet and on Allen Street. The third festival in 2007 included these same two venues plus the State Theatre. In 2008, the *Summer Jazz Celebration* moves to Bellefonte where it will be presented in the Garman Opera House Theatre, on the Diamond Stage and at Tallyrand Park's Gazebo.

The saxophone section for the Friends Big Band was from the Dance Band founded by Gene Borza and Chuck Ryan in 1972. For over a decade, the Dance Band was shaped by musical director Skip Wareham, who wrote arrangements for the band as well as charts for singers, including Catherine Dupuis. In addition to Skip's arrangements, the Dance Band (currently led by Les Shaw) plays the charts of the great big bands. The Friends Big Band sax section has been playing together as a quintet for many years, both as a big band section and as a sax quintet. Joe Alessandro led the section for many years. Personnel for the sax section in the Friends Big Band remained stable for the first two years but instrument doubling requirements in the third year caused a substitution. For 2008, we've made a few more substitutions, including replacing 88-year-old Joe Alessandro due to doctor's orders. Learning this made for a sad, sad day and marked the termination of a playing career for a man who has been an inspiration to each and every one of us. Don, Catherine and many others consider Joe to be a dear friend and mentor whose spirit will live on in the Friends Big Band and with each summer jazz festival.

The trumpet section has remained stable over the four years, with three players holding their chairs each year. The only change has been in one trumpet chair, losing 31-year-old Shawn McClintic to a heart attack in 2006. The same trumpet player has performed in this chair for the last two years.

In the trombone section there has been one different player each year. The other three trombone players have remained the same thus creating another stable section.

Each year the Friends Big Band has had the opportunity to play with an experienced rhythm section, the Russ Kassoff Trio. You can check out Russ' great playing on his CD *Somewhere* as well as his collaboration with Catherine on *The Rules of the Road*. In 2007 and again this year, Russ has brought in a drummer who many consider to be the best big band drummer playing today, Dennis Mackrel (Dennis is Mel Lewis' hand picked replacement in the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra). As Don said in his recent email to the Band, "I'll never forget how sensitive Dennis' brush work was on 'True Love' and also how he kicked the band on 'Geller's Cellar.' It swung more than Maynard's 'Cellar' and 'Stay Loose with Bruce!!'" Martin Wind has played bass the past two summers. This year we're thrilled to be playing with legendary Jay Anderson on the bass. It's truly a gas for the Friends Big Band to have the Kassoff rhythm section fuel the drive of the band. Add in the terrific Kassoff arrangements for the wonderful singing of Catherine Dupuis and you've got the ingredients for a fabulous hour of classic big band swing!

Singing with the Friends Big Band is a huge thrill for Catherine. She does get to sing in New York with the Russ Kassoff Big Band a couple of times each year, but this summer set is an exciting opportunity to craft a full big band set, especially as she collects these great Kassoff arrangements! Catherine is always so impressed with the experience of this talented group of musicians in the Friends Big Band. They gather the morning of the festival to do a quick rehearsal with her and the rhythm trio and then play the performance that afternoon. There are no weeks and months of rehearsals for this band. It's just a quick fly by at the charts and off we go - they're each and every one incredible readers and great musicians. The hour passes so quickly! And with such delight!

Putting a jazz festival together is no small task, especially long distance. And yet this event has been met with so much joy by the local musicians and the community that making it happen has been a total win-win situation. Over the years, Catherine has worked to create programs that showcase both the astoundingly talented local jazz community and new projects and sounds happening in the area. Guitarist Bucky Pizzarelli played the 2006 festival and asked Catherine 'How in the world does a small town like this have three working big bands that are so good? I mean (he went on), where the devil do these cats all come from?!' He was referring, of course, to the Friends Big Band, the VJO and the State High Jazz Band. What could she tell him?! Except that the depth and breadth of the musical talent in Central Pennsylvania is stunningly amazing and showcasing this talent is only one of the reasons Joe and Catherine felt we needed to have a jazz festival to look forward to each and every summer.

The festival is now presented by a fully recognized non-profit organization, JazzPA (www.jazzpa.com), which is building itself into a county-wide entity - with a vision to sponsor live jazz in every part of the county and throughout Central Pennsylvania. This new vision affords JazzPA the opportunity to branch out beyond State College, this year presenting the *Summer Jazz Celebration* (a 1-day/3-stage event) in historic Bellefonte (the home of the Mills Brothers!) on Saturday, July 26. Catherine is so appreciative of the local financial support that has afforded us the opportunity to create a working environment for all the local jazz musicians as well as an opportunity for interaction with jazz musicians working in New York and beyond. She's been determined from the get go that every performing musician will be paid for their contribution. The support of the local community has made this possible. We're also particularly grateful for Local 660's support of the event through their sponsorship of MPF funding from the national office. Since 2005, over eight locals have been represented at the jazz festival through Local 660 MPF funding, including Locals 660 and 802 (NYC). Catherine knows that all of this would make her mentor Skip Wareham smile. Joe and Catherine felt strongly about all of this from their very first discussion: This festival is first and foremost about supporting and giving visibility to the incredible jazz talent happening right here in Central Pennsylvania. Here's to many more years of great jazz in Central PA!



AFM Board Approved—Promotion and AD

Voices is a local monthly newspaper and is also available for free at stores around Centre County. Home delivery subscription is now available.

AFM 660 members can publicize their upcoming gigs for free by emailing their gig information -- the "who, what, where, when" -- to [Chris Byrne](mailto:Chris.Byrne@afm660.org) by the 15th of each month for inclusion. The ad will be published every other month so email at least the next two months of your gig schedule, and more if you know it. The **Voices** advertisement is sponsored by Albrecht Audio.

Voices, which runs a monthly column *Voices of Labor* by local labor unions, including an upcoming one by AFM 660, is now offering home subscription for \$25/year. If you would like to subscribe or donate to **Voices**, you can do so at <http://www.VoicesWeb.org>.





American Federation of Musicians - Local 660
Chartered October 29, 1913

President
[Christopher Lee](#)

Secretary
[John Thompson](#)

Treasurer
[Debbie Trudeau](#)

Executive Board
Christopher Byrne
Andrew Jackson, Sr.
Donald B. Keat II
Robert Nairn
Bruce Young

Serving Musicians in
Central Pennsylvania

AFM is an advocate for
MUSIC
MUSICIANS
JOBS
CAREERS
NETWORKING
ENCOURAGING MUSIC
IN OUR COMMUNITIES

WANTED
ARTICLES
ADs
STORIES
PHOTOS

SEND INFORMATION
TO MUSIC CENTRAL
Editor
JohnRVincenti@comcast.net

DEADLINE
20TH OF EACH
MONTH

AFM Local 660 July 2008

Spotlight on Joe Alessandro "Practice Makes Perfect"



In Curwensville his family would call him Giuseppe Vincenzo, we know him as Joe. His parents were Vincent and Julia Alessandro.

Speaking about music in his life, Joe sums it up by saying, "For a guy that never had a lesson I have had the opportunity to play with a lot of great musicians." Joe remembers his childhood as one of coming from a poor family in a community that did not provide music or art in their public schools. His memory of Clearfield and local musicians brings to mind Anthony Mitchell, who directed the U.S. Navy Band for more than 30 years. Mitchell's two other brothers played in the Air Force and Army bands respectively, which were first rate by any standard.

His Dad who worked in a brickyard bought him a second hand Sears and Roebuck trumpet at 10 years of age. It came with an instruction manual and so his father told him to read the manual and learn to play. Lessons were twenty-five cents in those days but his family was too poor to afford such luxury. So, Joe played and learned the trumpet on his own. He played the trumpet during his elementary school days but found that through no fault of his own, he had an incorrect mouth-

piece, and he tended to play the trumpet from the side of his mouth. His father bought him a saxophone again learning this instrument on his own. "I loved to practice," he said. You might say that "practice makes perfect" was Joe's motto in life, both in music and his professional career development.

Joe's life changed when he finished high school and entered Lock Haven College in 1942. Soon after, Joe received an offer from the United States Marines. The Marines offered him an opportunity to go to Officer's Training School and earn a bachelor's degree from Franklin Marshall College. Joe took the offer and in 1944 graduated with a degree in the Social Sciences, but it was during his years at Franklin Marshall that he first used his musical talent and played lead alto sax with the F&M dance band.

In 1947, Joe returned to Central Pennsylvania and received a Master's Degree in History from Penn State. He got that degree in 1948 and also married his sweetheart Helen Hurd. On July 31st, Joe and Helen will celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary. The Alessandros have one son, Kent who is an international banker in Madrid, Spain.

Following his Master's Degree Joe said he needed a job. A placement officer at Penn State alerted him to a job opening at the Ferguson Township Elementary School, Kindergarten through ninth grade. He worked for six months without a contract or placement in a tenure track. When he approached his supervisor and questioned these situations he was told that history teachers were a dime a dozen that what was needed was someone who could teach music and social studies. Joe told his supervisor that he was a musician and could easily teach music during his free periods. By March of 1949, Joe had 50 youth involved in a school band. He taught trumpet, trombone, clarinet, saxophone, and flute. He noted that they could only play from the "Easy Steps to the Band Music" books. The band became an immediate success. With the assistance of a local resident, Dick Grubb, who's son played the bass horn, he helped collect funds for uniforms and instruments for the band.

A new challenge came for Joe while at the elementary school because he was not certified as a music teacher; Joe needed to continue working but also needed to be certified. He did so through the cooperation of Penn State's Blue Band Director Jim Dunlop. Dunlop set up a semester schedule whereby Joe could learn to play the instrument and then take an exam to earn the credit "I had to earn it," Alessandro said, "Jim didn't do me any favors."

Later in 1954, Joe completed his doctorate in education with history as a minor. His thesis was on international education from his Northern China experience. Because of the McCarthy Era, Joe actually had a meeting with Penn State President Milton Eisenhower to ensure that his thesis would not be a problem. Eisenhower personally approved his thesis. Joe's new professional career was soon to take-off and so did his music.

In 1955, Joe resigned his elementary school position and thought he was headed to New Jersey to become a principal of a large elementary school, but simultaneously he was offered an opportunity to head a new international project at Penn State. There was one snag—he had to speak Spanish. During the interview though qualified in most areas he was asked about his proficiency in Spanish. He said he would learn it. Learn it he did and passed the test in less than two months. He took the job as an Assistant Professor for the Latin American Project.

As time progressed, Dr. Alessandro became a full professor and taught in the Educational Policies Program. He retired January 1, 1986. Joe's international expertise also landed him opportunities to work with the World Bank, Ford Foundation, UNESCO and the U.S. State Department's Agency for International Development.

Joe has lived an interesting life that invoked words like challenge, change, and opportunity, but it was his love of music that has continued for 78 years. On June 26, 2008, Joe celebrated his 88th birthday.

Some noteworthy music facts about Joe—charter member of AFM's Local 660, published the first directory in 1975, and is a Life Member. Andrew Jackson was one of his first advisees at Penn State. Catherine Dupuis and Joe conceived and he named the Friends Band (see related article in this issue).

Joe has played with many bands over the years including the Booth Watmaugh Band, The Ted Seitz Quartet, The Duke Morris Quartet, The Little German Band, The Community Band, and the State College Dance Band.

Since 1986, Joe and Helen spend six months in Happy Valley (State College) and six months in Green Valley, Arizona. Joe noted that when he joined the Green Valley concert band in 1986 there were only 17 musicians. Today, it has grown to 80 members. Joe plays saxophone, clarinet, and flute. In Green Valley he plays lead alto with the Green Valley Stage Band (17 instrumentalists and 2 vocalists) and The Green Valley Big Band Sounds group (17 members and one female singer). Both of these bands play about 8 to 10 gigs per music season before crowds of up to 800 people. The musicians are some of the best who live and play in Southern Arizona. Their ages range from 65 to 94. Yes the trombone player is 94 years young.

Music and his professional career have definitely provided Joe Alessandro with many interesting and wonderful experiences. One can say that he has proven that **Practice Makes Perfect**.

Our Best to Joe and Helen!

