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—Contributor..... Louis Erlanger
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Notes from editor (not for publication):



HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

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1 Vermont Blues Society has a busy summer ahead

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2 Statewide nonprofit plans blues picnic, concert, and jam
3 session fundraiser in Manchester

####END SUBHED####

4 TEXT BODY:

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5 LAST YEAR, the young Grammy-nominated Georgia blues
6 singer/guitarist Jontavious Willis played a concert at the Stone
7 Church in Brattleboro.

8 This year, blues singers Corey Harris and Sunny
9 Lowdown gave a concert at Next Stage Arts in Putney.

10 For multiple years, there has been a blues component to
11 the Discover Jazz Festival in Burlington.

12 What these shows and others have had in common is
13 that they were co-sponsored by the Vermont Blues Society (VBS),
14 a recognized tax-exempt non-profit that is dedicated to spreading
15 blues and blues education in Vermont.

16 The Vermont Blues Society was created in 2018 by
17 Dennis and Marion Wilmott, Sandy Combs, and Charlie Frazier
18 from the Burlington area.

19 Other states had their own blues societies, but Vermont
20 did not. The goal was to increase awareness of the blues in
21 Vermont — the various blues jams that were taking place, the
22 Vermont musicians who play blues, the Vermont radio shows and
23 other media that focus on blues.

24 VBS created a website (vermontbluessociety.org) with a
25 blues events calendar and profiles of blues musicians and bands
26 in Vermont. They also began to sponsor an annual local
27 competition for bands and artists who wanted to participate in
28 the national Blues Foundation's International Blues Challenge in
29 Memphis, an annual competition that attracts blues musicians
30 from all over the world.

31 Local competitions in each state determine who will be
32 sent to the IBC each year, and two musicians from the Brattleboro
33 area, Sunny Lowdown and Jesse Lepkoff, won the local
34 competitions in two different years.

35 The current board chair of VBS is Bob Stannard, a former
36 member of the Vermont Legislature and a blues musician himself.

37 When asked about VBS's mission, he said that "I've spent
38 all my adult life listening to and playing blues music, a music that
39 was born out of great pain and suffering and played by people I
40 greatly respect. It is the best music ever made. The Vermont Blues
41 Society exists to help keep this music alive and well."

42 * * *

43 THE BLUES SOCIETY is expanding its mission to include
44 more blues education and more concert co-sponsorships. It has
45 also built a blues history section on its website.

46 Some members have been reaching out to schools to
47 present live music and blues history sessions. The first of these
48 was held at the Manchester Community Library, and was a big
49 success. It was livestreamed and archived on Greater Northshire
50 Access Television (GNAT), the community public-access
51 television station there.

52 On Saturday, June 20, starting at 2 p.m., the Vermont
53 Blues Society will be hold its first-ever blues picnic, concert, and
54 jam session fundraiser at the Manchester Community Library (138
55 Cemetery Ave, Manchester Center). It is an opportunity for
56 Vermont blues fans and musicians to get together, jam, and
57 celebrate the music.

58 The concert lineup includes Stannard's band as the house
59 band, backing Blues Music Award winner and Grammy nominee
60 Anthony Geraci, blues singer Gina Coleman, blues pianist John
61 Fusco (who also wrote the screenplay for the film *Crossroads*),
62 and other special guests.

63 Blues Blast Music Award nominee Sunny Lowdown will
64 open the show with a solo blues performance.

65 The blues picnic is free to the public, with donations
66 encouraged, and musicians should bring their instruments for the
67 jam session.

68 Also coming up: On Saturday, July 25, VBS will
69 cosponsor harmonica virtuoso Howard Levy at Next Stage in
70 Putney. For more information, visit vermontbluessociety.org.

####END TEXT####

BIO/COATTAIL:

####BEGIN BIO/COATTAIL####

71 **LOUIS ERLANGER** (aka Sunny Lowdown) lives in
72 Brattleboro and is a blues musician and member of the Vermont
73 Blues Society. *The Commons'* Deeper Dive column gives artists,
74 arts organizations, and other nonprofits elbow room to write in
75 first person and be unabashedly opinionated, passionate, and
76 analytical about their own creative work and events.

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