

Volunteer Spotlight: Tony Anthonisen

How long have you been a volunteer with MBOTMA?

20+ years

What current volunteer role(s) do you have with MBOTMA?

Organizer of the Twin Cities Ukulele Club and Great Minnesota Uke Gathering (held at the Minnesota Fall Bluegrass Jam).

What MBOTMA volunteer role(s) have you held in the past?

Chair of the Minnesota Homegrown Kickoff for many years. Volunteer roles at many MBOTMA events. Jam and workshop leader at many MBOTMA festivals and events, including MBOTMA Fundraiser, Winter Bluegrass Weekend, Minnesota Homegrown Kickoff, August Festival and Minnesota Fall Bluegrass Jam. Was awarded the Tom O'Neill "Lifetime of Service" Award in 2014. An award I truly cherish!

How long have you been part of MBOTMA and what brought you into the organization?

First involved in about 1996. I was taking guitar lessons at Homestead Pickin Parlor, and my instructors (Brian Fesler, Bill Cagley and Adam Granger) led me into jamming at Homestead. They also told me about MBOTMA. I love the times I have had with my MBOTMA friends! They have truly become my best friends. The first event for which I volunteered was the the August Festival. I helped Paul Christensen with first aid support at the festival. From then on, I was hooked!

Why are you a MBOTMA volunteer?

Music has brought me a great deal of enjoyment. Volunteering is my way of giving back. I most like teaching workshops and leading jams. Helping and seeing people really get into and enjoy music is the absolute greatest feeling.



Watching the "light bulb light up" in their music life makes it all worth while.

Do you have a favorite festival or activity at a festival?

Yes, all of them. I'm serious. I would be hard pressed to name just one. OK, I'll stick my neck out and say the Winter Weekend. Tons of great jamming. Wonderful concerts. But then, that's really all the festivals.

How has being a volunteer impacted you?

It has brought many good friends and gratifying times. Why not do something that is so easy and fun?

What are some of your hobbies and interests?

When I'm not involved with music - bicycle riding and walking. When I was younger - bicycle riding, skiing and snowboarding. Music - I love playing and singing bluegrass music. I lead about 100 jams and workshops a year for the

Twin Cities Ukulele Club and at Steve Kaufman's Acoustic Kamp. Used to live and breathe bluegrass guitar and fiddle tunes on guitar before tearing both rotator cuffs in 2012. Since then, just substitute ukulele for guitar. I often say that if I had taken up ukulele before guitar, I'm not so sure I would have taken up the guitar. Ukulele is that much fun! And, bluegrass and fiddle tunes work out just fine on the ukulele!

Do you have a fun story about being a volunteer or about MBOTMA that you'd like to share?

The mud at El Rancho Manana. Heavy rains brought flooded areas and mud. Lots of mud. I can't tell you how many times we watched cars, trucks and campers slither and slide around on the roads, particularly on the road up the hill to the performer parking area for the stage. We would try to keep reasonably clean at first, but finally just accepted the fact that mud was fun.

What occupation did you have or do you have now?

Management and training background. Currently a part time hardware and software trainer with Apple Computer.

What's a fun fact about you?

At the festivals, I had a goal of getting to bed early first night (1 to 2 a.m. or so) to save up my energy for the next night. There were no time limits for the final night.

What would you tell a new MBOTMA member/volunteer?

Do it! It will be the beginning of a wonderful experience, including making some wonderful friends

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