

Music, song, dance and much laughter filled our days at Jesse's camps 2026!

Every year, we invite a special guest to inspire our youngsters. This year, we were so fortunate to have the internationally acclaimed Grammy winner and director of The Count Basie Orchestra, Scotty Barnhart who thrilled us with his dance inducing jazz. He played some of his favorite tunes and demonstrated how versatile his trumpet can be. He taught the names of the different inserts for his trumpet and showed how they change its sound. Three of Mr. Barnhart's students came with him and shared their love of the keyboard, drums and bass. Some of our youngsters had the opportunity to try the drums and keyboard. What an incredible way to begin our week!

We had guitar and ukulele instruction by Dr. Carrie Danielson who teaches Community Music at FSU's College of Music. The BA degree In Community Music offered at FSU is the first in the nation. We had old time dance instruction by Mary Allgire of the Hot Pepper Stepper Cloggers who has been with us 8 years now. Mary recruited many local musicians so we could have live music to learn old time dances with. And, we had harmonica lessons with Barry Sager who teaches music at music camps and at local schools.

My heartfelt thanks to the many openhearted musicians and dancers who came to Jesse's camp. Mary Allgire and Dr. Carrie Danielson and I had been talking over how to add music to our dance component, and Mary said having musicians at each of her dance sessions would help and then she thought having old time dancers at the dance would help, too. What a giving music community we have! Not only did the musicians play tunes while Mary taught dance, they also introduced their instruments to our youngsters and let them touch and hold them. And, with the dancers included in each circle, we had the best old-time dance ever! Thank you to our musicians Laura Gayle Green, Yvonne Gsteiger, Jimmy Prater, Bobby Lolley, Hepzibah Jones, Wade England, John England, Erice Shepherd, and Kirill Litvak. Thank you to our dancers Madelon Horwich, Jerry Ziewitz, Norma Skaggs, Larry Teich, Lucy Schneider, Havenya Yaya, Pam Lightner, Lee Rigby, and Bill Hoatson. Thank you also to The Long Forgotten String Band members, Frank Lindamood, Donald Shrum, and Fred Slade. Our new young musicians had a chance to play with the band. What an experience for us all.

I want to also acknowledge that the Friends of the Old Time Dance made a donation for us to buy shakers. Those youngsters who didn't want to play ukes or guitars had shakers. Awesome!

Interspersed with music and dance were field trips to the great outdoors with Forester Emeritus Stan Rosenthal to enjoy our spring weather on a very chilly morning with blue skies and sunlight streaming through the trees. We visited the Debbie Lightsey Nature Park where Stan led a walk through the park teaching us tree identification. We also spent quiet moments listening to hear what birds were singing. Other field trips included a visit to the old Florida Capitol building, Wakulla Springs, and bowling.

The pictures and videos tell the story of our magical week together.

Heartfelt thanks to Donna Dillon and Chris Franzetti for the best shopping trip for fresh fruits, vegies, cheese, and snacks for the week! This welcome addition is always very special.

And so, another year of Jesse's camps has come to a close. I always hope our youngsters make new friends, learn something new, and are inspired by a new experience. Engage, empower and inspire. My heart is so full with gratitude for all those who make this camp a week to remember. TPRNA's Bobby Sparks and the Community Center Supervisors Aeshah McQueen-Jefferson (Walker-Ford), Chris Brown (Jack McLean), Yolando Westberry (LeVerne Payne), Kelley Boykins (Lawrence-Gregory), and Jerrell Dukes (Jake Gaither) and their assistants and staff have my admiration, respect and gratitude for all they do throughout the year.

Huge thanks as always to Ashley Edwards, Director of Tallahassee Parks, Recreation, and Neighborhood Affairs (TPRNA) and her fine staff for their support and making this dream a reality.

With a heart filled with gratitude and love,

Martha Weinstein

Jesse's Mom and Founder of Jesse's Camps

