

NOTES FROM AREA 1 CHAIR



Carlene Ruesenberg
Area 1 Chair

Hello, fellow ringers! With the pre-Thanksgiving snow (at least in northern New England where I am) my thoughts are definitely on Christmas, either preparing for our Advent and Christmas Eve services, or the many Christmas-themed concerts to play in or attend, or just preparing for family gatherings. Your Area 1 Board has also been busy getting ready for the events for you in the coming year. Here are some highlights:

Strategic Planning – We discussed the results of the surveys that you submitted, and one thing came out clear, that you value our events, particularly Festival/Conference and skills workshops that are local. We will certainly continue to do that with our Winter Workshop and Spring Rings, along with Festival/Conference. The other priority that came out of that was building up our Youth programs. We have had our High School Ringouts in the past, but the last one was cancelled due to low registrations, and there have not been plans to hold another one. We are in the process of looking into what other types of programs we can offer for youth and their directors. We are hoping we can develop relationships with music educators and music educators-in-training so that they can easily incorporate handchimes and handbells in their music programs. Along with the National office, we are looking into ways to encourage youth to be lifelong ringers. We can all agree that getting more young people involved will sustain the organization into the future. We just have to figure out how to make that happen.

Another way you can support handbells in your community is to attend a concert presented by one of our many excellent community choirs in New England. Better yet, attend one with a friend (or two) who have never heard a handbell choir before! We all love our unique instrument, so let's share the love! See the calendar of events in this issue of the Fundamental Tone or on our web site to find a concert that will be happening near you. Some concerts have admission fees, and some are free (with a free-will donation). I'm sure all the musicians who are playing this holiday season will appreciate your attendance!

Winter Workshop is just around the corner! Register now for February 1-2, 2019 at the UMass/Amherst campus center. Park your car in the garage Friday afternoon, and stay toasty warm in the building (including the Hotel UMass) until Saturday afternoon. Sign up for ringing in the Coppers Plus ringing track with Karen James, or plan to take classes we will offer for both ringers and directors. Details about registration and getting a discount on your hotel room are in this Fundamental Tone. This is a great way to get a taste of Festival, and be with your fellow handbell ringers from around the Area. Oh, and did I mention that the food is excellent as well? Get out of winter, and get into handbells at UMass!

Check out the calendar of events for other events in your area this spring. Connecticut, Mass, New Hampshire and Vermont are all offering Spring Rings again this year in March and April... what a great way to get geared up for Festival/Conference!

Speaking of Festival/Conference, we're all excited about coming to a new venue at the University of Hartford. The campus is much more compact, the terrain is flat, and the dorms/dining commons are right between the Athletic Center where the massed ringing floor will be, and the classroom buildings where the workshops will be. We are working on creating an interesting mix of classes and workshops, and we hope to have the full registration details available after the first of the year. You can sign up your group now on the website. Don't delay! If your choir is planning to attend, sign up for a group number now.

One new thing at this year's Festival/Conference that will be an opportunity to take the three topics towards Level 1 Certification. We will have accredited faculty teaching Techniques 1, Theory 1 and Conducting 1 at different times so you can get your certification all at once! If you aren't familiar with the Handbell Musicians of America's Certification Program, visit www.certification.handbellmusicians.org. The certification courses are a way for you to get the basic skills and knowledge that will help you be a better handbell musician, with curriculum that is consistent across the national handbell community. I just got my Level 1 certification this past summer, and it took me three years to do it. This is a great opportunity to do it in just four days! If you want to find out more about it, please contact me at chair.area1@handbellmusicians.org.

Finally, I'm sure I speak for all of us on the Area 1 Board in wishing you the happiest of holidays this season, and many blessings to you and your loved ones.

Keep ringing!
Carlene