

OSFR RIVERFEST 2017

May 4, 2017



Emcee Storm Roberts, OSFR President Elect Mike Roth, 2017 Winner Donald Blicht, OSFR President Pam Smith, OSFR member, past president and song contest founder Merrillee Malwitz-Jipson

RiverFest 2017, best ever, best songs, best crowd, best time. Thanks above all to our many hardworking volunteers, thanks to the contestants, thank to our judges, thanks to all our sponsors, thanks to all the donors, thanks to Storm Roberts of 98.5, thanks to the bands, and thanks to Doug Jipson and Rum 138 for the great facilities. And thanks to Ray Carson for the photos and to Doug Jipson of Digital Productions who video-taped the event.

[Click here to view all of the videos in our YouTube Playlist.](#)

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE WINNER DONALD BLITCH

Donald Blitch, Gainesville, song: [“Trotline”](#)

A.k.a. ‘Mr. Aullie,’ Donald was born and raised in Gainesville, FL. Being a local musician since the mid-seventies ‘Mr. Aullie’ has been writing songs about his experiences and memories growing up in Florida. He has been performing at the Florida Folk Festival, Gamble Rogers Festival, and many other Florida favorite venues for music and culture for many years. Now, he is a regular at Satchel’s and other Gainesville venues. A winner of the Gamble Rogers tribute song contest in 2013, he has continued song writing about his love and adventures in Florida. This song is based on actual events between the mid to late sixties.

These are just a few of the memories I’ve had growing up here in Florida, when it was a different time and kids were able to roam and adventure freely, exploring the treasures in our own back yard.”

Ellen Bukstel, High Springs, song: [“Goin’ Down To The River”](#)

From menopause to marijuana...From peace to politics... From poignant to provocative... Ellen Bukstel writes and sings about it all. A veteran to the stage since childhood, she has been honored with close to 50 songwriting and music video awards and acknowledgments since 2002. Her songs are making a huge

difference in people's lives.

The song is generally about how the river and the environment makes me feel and the peacefulness it inspires. It has been inspired by my newly acquired appreciation of the beauty of this part of the state. I lived in South Florida my entire life and never had an opportunity to truly experience the natural waters and landscape that Northern Florida has to offer. I had never seen or experienced the springs and the rivers and I am so happy to be living up here after all this time. I feel lucky, after a lifetime, now to be living on five acres with forest and wildlife roaming ALL around our home. It is just beautiful. And peaceful. After many songs.....this is my first one about Florida.

Ronny McKinley song: ["I Went Fishin' ... On That Santa Fe River"](#)

No other information.

Rick Hutton, Gainesville, song: ["Rockin' Down the River"](#)

Rick first moved to this area back in college. After he graduated he had always wanted to come back. He and his wife have been blessed to live here for the last 20 years. Rick is an engineer by day and a musician by night. He loves being in the water.

My wife and I met way back when in college and spent a lot of

time together on the river when we were getting to know each other.

Brian Morse, Sparr, song:, ["Brown Eyed Lady"](#)

Founder of the band Treblehawk, Brian has been creating his own brand of music for centuries it seems. He takes inspiration from the earth, air, fire, water, and spirit in all things and gives that emotion a voice.

"I tried to capture that slow dark drift, using a rhyme scheme that reflects those unexpected turns."

Leo L Bloom, Gainesville, song: ["Santa Fe"](#)

He graduated from UF's School of Education in 1976 and left Gainesville. He visited his dad often while he was a student and they would go to the Santa Fe River. Recently retired from Miami Dade's Superintendent of Schools teaching autism students, he returned to Gainesville with his wife. They decided this area was the perfect place to live out the rest of their lives. It reminded him of the river that runs through the village where he was born in northern Spain.

"My song is from the heart. It is a compilation of feelings that I have about the river and the times I spent there with my dad. Like I said, it is straight from the heart."

Sarah Donnini, High Springs, song: ["That River is My Home"](#)

Sarah Donnini is a 26-year old Fine arts and Sculpture Major at the University of North Florida and a new mom. She grew up on her family property just off the Santa Fe River. Even though she has lived and traveled all around, that is her true home.

"I wrote this song out of my deep love for the Santa Fe River and the closeness I have always felt with it. It truly is where my roots are, and I honestly couldn't think of any other place I would call home. I tried to be as true to myself and my heart when writing this song as I possibly could."



Merrillee Malwitz-Jipson, song contest founder, and 2017

contestants