



## Newsletter

**Independence  
Village** SENIOR LIVING  
AVON LAKE, OH

## COMMUNITY PARTNER

Independence Village of Avon Lake is a vibrant community offering memory care, assisted living, and independent living options across its 190 apartments. Under the guidance of Life Enrichment Director Cheryl Brammer, the village is known for its dynamic environment and the special moments created for its residents. With a diverse range of mobility and care needs, Cheryl and her team tailor events to ensure everyone feels included and engaged.

Independence Village hosts Roots of American Music programming twice-monthly during Happy Hour on Fridays. These events typically feature a solo performer, who performs in the memory care neighborhood before moving to the atrium in the independent living area. The music is a delightful mix featuring either guitar or piano, often accompanied by singing that encourages residents to join in.

“We recently had a new artist, Chris Hatton, in to perform,” explains Brammer. “He struck just the right chord with the residents. There was a joy and energy in the room that was lovely to see. He had everyone dancing and singing along.”

Brammer says that ROOTS staff has made the booking process simple and engaging. “(ROOTS Education Program Director) Bettyjeane Quimby visited the location to understand the layout and performance space,” she says. “Also, Bettyjeane has incorporated an app which provides a list of musicians and facilitates communication for booking and other needs.”

Not only that, but ROOTS provides the Senior Center Performance feedback form, which helps the village gather and share feedback and concerns, ensuring that the programming continues to meet the residents’ expectations.

Independence Village of Avon Lake remains a beacon of community spirit, where every resident is valued and supported. Through innovative programming and a commitment to creating special moments, the village continues to thrive, offering a welcoming home to all its residents.

Learn more about our community partner [HERE](#)

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## Meet ROOTS Board Member: Vince Slusarz



Vince Slusarz is the Immediate Past President of the Roots of American Music Board of Directors. He was referred to the ROOTS Board by Clint Holley from Well Made Music who is a vendor for Gotta Groove Records. Vince works with Gotta Groove Records a longtime supporter of local music and musicians in Ohio.

Vince believes the mission of ROOTS is uniquely focused and "does not just serve our clients, but helps local musicians obtain additional income from their artistry." ROOTS "work throughout the years has touched thousands of students, senior citizens and members of our NE Ohio community- every performance has a specific resonance to each person in that moment, that is the power of music."

As a Board member it is each individual's "engagement and consistent effort that is critical to fulfilling ROOTS' mission. I am continually "amazed by the talents of our Teaching Artists and their effect on our clients."

Learn more about [Gotta Groove Records](#).

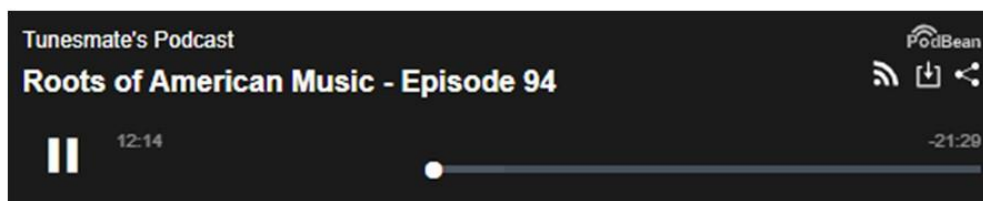
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## Roots of American Music – Episode 94

BY [MARC MAJERS](#) FEBRUARY 17, 2023

In this episode of Tunesmate's podcast, discover how Roots of American Music strengthens communities, fosters connections, and expands access to music. Join us as Executive Director, Michele Colopy shares how this nonprofit brings people together through live performances and music education.





Mark your calendar today to attend the **ROOTS Crescendo Awards** featuring the:

- \* William Woods Excellence in Teaching Award to a K-12 educator
- \* Recognition Award to the Stop the Hate ROOTS Teaching Artist Composer(s)
- \* Partner Agency Recognition
- \* ROOTS Teaching and Performing Artist Recognition
- \* Live music and a Silent Auction!

[Learn about the 2024 Awards](#)

Become a Crescendo Awards Sponsor



**Sunday, March 23, 2025**

**5:30 PM**

**(Doors 5:00 PM)**

**[B Side Lounge](#)**

**2785 Euclid Heights Blvd, Cleveland Heights, OH 44106**

**FREE - [RSVP for entry HERE](#)**

**ALL AGES ARE WELCOME**

B Side Lounge is partnering with **Roots of American Music** to feature performing artists **Esther Fitz** and **Erin Nicole Neal and The Chill Factors**. **Esther Fitz** is an eclectic entertainer, songwriter, and award-winning vocalist, born and raised in Cleveland, Ohio. She has performed on stages across the world. Whether close to home or elsewhere, she is guaranteed to bring energy and passion to any stage. Her most recent recording called *Sweet Things*, is a five-track EP released in the Fall of 2022. When she is not performing, she teaches songwriting and photography.

Multi-instrumentalist **Erin Nicole Neal** has been performing with her bands all over Ohio and beyond since 2015. In The Chill Factors, Erin leads with vocals, bass, and keys. Praised for unique vocal phrasing and bass technique, she weaves through blues, rock, pop, soul, funk, R&B, and jazz.

*This weekly series is made possible by a generous grant from the Live Music Society. Their mission is to recognize and protect small venues and listening rooms across the United States so that live music can remain accessible to all.*

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## ***Give the Gift of Music by Honoring and Celebrating Special People and Events in Your Life***



Your special person will receive an acknowledgment by ROOTS of your recognition and how they impacted your life. Memorials will be listed on the ROOTS website, if you choose. (The acknowledgement will not include your donation amount.)

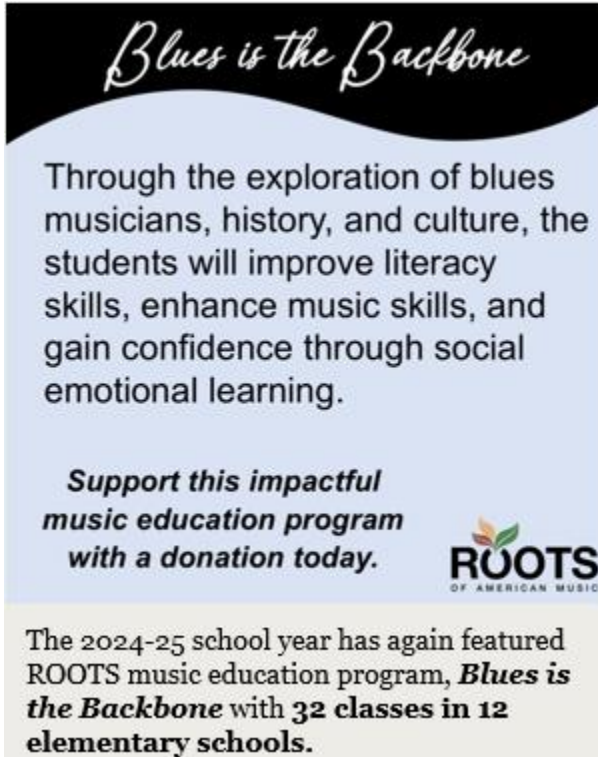
Consider this gift for the special person or event in your life!

Thank you for your support! It makes a difference in the lives of others. Last year ROOTS served over 18,000 Northeast Ohioans due to donors like you!

**Click [HERE](#), select a gift value then check the box- "Dedicate this Gift"**



## Impact of Music Enriches lives

A graphic with a black top section containing the title 'Blues is the Backbone' in white cursive. Below is a light blue section with text about the program's benefits. At the bottom is a light tan section with text about the 2024-25 school year. The ROOTS logo is on the right side of the blue section.

*Blues is the Backbone*

Through the exploration of blues musicians, history, and culture, the students will improve literacy skills, enhance music skills, and gain confidence through social emotional learning.

*Support this impactful music education program with a donation today.*

The 2024-25 school year has again featured ROOTS music education program, ***Blues is the Backbone*** with **32 classes in 12 elementary schools.**

**ROOTS**  
OF AMERICAN MUSIC

*A ROOTS Teaching Artist reported after one class session from Fall semester:*

"Students expressed pride and happiness about their new song, "Strange Things Happen on Halloween," more students are clear about the difference between steady beat and rhythm, more students are remembering tempo, students are successfully integrating dynamics into songs, several students remember the name of the theme song and its composer, students are singing the theme song with gusto."

**Austin Walkin' Cane**  
singer, songwriter and slide guitarist



**March 13**  
**@**  
**7:30pm**

*Performing with him:*

- *Kristine Jackson: vocals/bass*
- *Dave Morrison: vocals/harmonica*
- *Rod Reisman: drums*



**Happy Days Lodge**  
500 W. Streetsboro Rd.  
Peninsula, OH



Bring your friends and family to Cuyahoga Valley National Park for live **#music** at Happy Days Lodge! In March we're featuring: Austin Walkin' Kane

*March 13 @ 7:30pm: Immerse yourself in the blues with Austin Walkin' Cane, singer, songwriter and slide guitarist.*

**For tickets select [HERE](#)**



## YOUR DONATION SUPPORTS ROOTS PROGRAMS

**ROOTS programs receive *just 60% of funding from public and private foundations.***

***Consider a recurring monthly donation today so we can bring music that changes lives, touches the heart, and restores memories and human connection to residents of Northeast Ohio.***

General Donation

Impact A Specific Program

Crescendo Awards Sponsorships

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### ROOTS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Greg Thompson,**  
President

**Joe LaGuardia,**  
Treasurer

**Rachel Diroll-  
Zack, Secretary**

**Board members  
at large**



Newsletter

EMAIL THIS NEWSLETTER TO A FRIEND  
OR SEND THEM THE LINK TO SIGN UP TO  
RECEIVE IT DIRECTLY

<https://www.rootsofamericanmusic.org/news/>

Vince Slusarz  
Prakash Ganesh  
Katie VanDusen  
Robert Saada  
Josh Walsh  
Antoinette  
Brown  
Anthony Parker  
Vilmarie Perez

## Meet our New Board Member: Vilmarie Perez



Vilmarie Perez serves as Assistant Director for Career Readiness at Oberlin College, overseeing the Careers with [Social Impact career community](#). In this role, she empowers students to become agents of positive change while equipping them for successful future careers. Before Oberlin College, Vilmarie was a Connections Behavioral and Mental Health Care Coordinator for 13 years at Positive Education Program (PEP) in Cleveland, providing comprehensive trauma-informed services for children and youth. Vilmarie is an accomplished professional with over 17 years of comprehensive public service experience, including a full spectrum of justice system advocacy, qualitative and quantitative research, cultural diversity and equity outreach, and community-based organizing.

*We nourish our neighborhoods with the transformative power of music through education and performance. Your support makes a difference in the lives of kindergarten through 12th grade students as well as families in music deserts, senior communities and adult day centers. ROOTS' music changes lives, touches the heart, and restores memories and human connection to residents of Northeast Ohio.*

# **We are grateful to our Foundation Partners**



## ***Thank You to Our Funders!***

The Kulas Foundation  
John P. Murphy Foundation  
Martha Holden Jennings Foundation  
Fidelity Charitable DAF's  
Funny Times Peace Fund  
Louis & Sylvia Rosenblum Memorial  
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Joshua R. Weil Search for  
Meaning Fund  
Lillian C. Wilson, Trust  
Eva L. & Joseph M. Bruening  
Foundation  
Envantage

***And individual donors like you!***

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