

Here are some of the changes we have made at the 2017 Western Open in an attempt to continually evolve the contest and keep it “contestant friendly”:

- 1) Instead of a concert Thursday night, October 19, we are planning to host an *Old Time Gospel Jam* beginning at 6:30 PM. There will be no admission charge, and participants will just sign up at the door for performance slots.
- 2) We are moving the concert to Friday night and have re-worked the schedule to accommodate this change. (*See the tentative schedule*). The schedule was also changed to reflect parent requests to decrease the time between the first and second rounds for our two youngest divisions; consolidating the Young Adult and Adult divisions; and eliminating the Jr Jukebox (because of a trend of decreased participation). For 2017, both rounds of the Peewee, JR JR, Senior, Sr Sr, Jr Picking, and Open Picking will be completed on Friday before dinner. Awards will be handed out after dinner and the winners will be invited to each play one tune as the warm-up for the concert to follow. The Open Jukebox Division will be on Saturday night.
- 3) Speaking of concert, *Byron Berline* will be our headliner on Friday.
- 4) The Open Division will pay only 5 places, but we will increase the prize money to the following:
1st place \$600; 2nd place \$475; 3rd place \$400; 4th place \$325; and 5th place \$250.
- 5) Due to lack of contestants over the past several years, we will be consolidating the Young Adult and Adult into one division, Adult ages 18-54.
- 6) The judges for 2017 will be unsequestered for the entire contest-- sitting in front of the contestants, stage right, with the timer and scorekeeper sitting beside the judges. Among the reasons for this change were: better communication between the judges and MC; and improving the judges' experience of the contestants' performances
- 7) Judges will continue to be encouraged to add comments to the scoresheets.
- 8) The 4" time limit will continue to be strictly enforced with no grace period for all fiddle divisions.
- 9) We are adding a clarification to the rules that having three standard guitar accompanists will incur a 5 point penalty. We have had the rule for some time, but have not had any consequence for violating the rule.
- 10) Because of the changes to the schedule, changes to the ticket prices were necessary:
Thursday-- no charge unless you choose to purchase dinner
Friday-- All Day ticket includes the concert-- \$20 General Admission, \$15 Senior; \$15 concert only
Saturday-- Single day ticket prices remain the same-- \$10 General Admission, \$8 Senior
All Events Pass-- includes all contest and concert: \$25 General admission, \$20 Senior
A **ribbon** gets you in to all events free: contestant, guest, official, judge etc.