

PRESS RELEASE...For Immediate Release

Thomas Point Beach has been bringing Bluegrass to Brunswick Since 1979

The Thomas Point Beach Bluegrass Festival celebrates a 40 year history on Labor Day Weekend

Brunswick, ME- March 12, 2019 – The Thomas Point Beach Bluegrass Festival celebrates 40 years of music and memories this summer, continuing a Labor Day tradition on August 29, 30, 31, and September 1, 2019. The Festival was first established in 1979 by Pati Crooker, of Brunswick, Maine, with the goal of bringing traditional Bluegrass Music to the Mid-coast region. Since its inception, the Thomas Point Beach Bluegrass Festival has hosted nearly 300 of the best bands in Bluegrass music on its historic stage, including fan favorites, internationally renowned acts, Bluegrass legends, and up-and-coming new talent.

The Bluegrass Festival was born out of Pati Crooker's desire to bring quality, family friendly programming to Thomas Point Beach, the business that was begun by her parents in 1956. Pati was only 11 years old when the Crooker family turned the recreational property into the "Family Fun Spot". Harry C. Crooker, Pati's father, bought the land with the goal of providing a safe, clean facility for young and old to enjoy time together in the outdoors. By 1979, Pati was fully committed to managing the growing day park and beach, and she was seeking events that could help support and sustain the daily operations. In an article from *Bluegrass Unlimited Magazine* in 1999, Crooker explained, *"I just tried the idea of a festival to help support my existing business and try to supplement the income from the day park. People told me I could never make any money at it, that festivals don't make money, but you have to love it to do it. The festival did help keep the park going, and eventually I found I truly loved it. It's like having friends come over to spend the weekend with me."*

The Thomas Point Beach Bluegrass Festival ran for 30 successful years, earning a reputation for being one of the nation's best managed and family-friendly festivals, and was highly acclaimed for its attention to detail and consistent show quality. Pati's commitment to excellence culminated in winning the 2007 International Bluegrass Associations Event of the year in Nashville. The festival went on an indefinite hiatus in 2008, as Pati took time off to focus on her family, but the people still came to camp and the music still played on Labor Day weekend, stage show or no stage show. These "non-festival" years proved the life of the event was so much bigger than the line-up on stage, so in 2011 Pati, this time with the support of her son Michael Mulligan, brought the event back re-branded as the *"Bluegrass Special."* Long-time festival associate Shari Elder, remembers her saying, *"They are coming anyway, we might as well give them a show."*

The *"Bluegrass Special"* continued for several years to draw in friends old and new to hear the high lonesome sounds of the bluegrass genre like it had never missed a beat. In her 2015 program book, Pati quoted Bill Monroe, known as the Father of Bluegrass Music: *"Bluegrass has brought more people together, and more friends than any music in the world. You meet people at festivals and renew acquaintances year after year."* Pati and Bill shared a close friendship and Mr. Monroe played the festival 4 times over the years. Pati believed in his words, and it showed in the special touches she brought to her event, such as the "Welcome Home" sign at the gate and hand-written notes thanking patrons for their attendance. She considered the staff, musicians, and guests all part of one big family, and the festival was the like her annual family reunion. In 2015, Pati enjoyed every second of what she may have suspected would be her last Bluegrass Festival, as she worked the whole season while battling cancer. That year's show was like no other, and Pati spent as much time as she could enjoying the friends and music she loved in the place closest to her heart.

In June 2016, Pati lost her life to cancer. That Labor Day weekend a "Celebration of Life" was held in lieu of the festival to honor her life and legacy, and music played on during a beachfront service, a stage show, and throughout the camping groves as people shared their stories and memories. With love and support from so many, the decision to keep the tradition going seemed obvious, and in 2017 the next generation took up the torch. Michael, his wife Jennifer and Shari Elder decided to bring back the popular event with the help and support of long-time festival associate Jenna Summers, family and dear friends.

After two successful years under this team, the Thomas Point Beach Festival prepares to celebrate 40 years of new and old traditions. In the touching words of one festival goer, the event is described- *"Awesome time listening to great music, hanging out with great people, playing at the beach and all in a wonderful place. Before 2018 it had been 10 years since I attended the festival. The world is not the same place it was 10 years ago and I am not the same person I was 10 years ago but somehow this festival is still just as great 10 years later."*

The 2019 show continues a well-established format, with the stage show mixing regional favorites with Bluegrass legends and award winners, as well as incorporating both traditional and the contemporary styles. The event kicks off Thursday with the Showcase Competition featuring six outstanding up-and-coming bands, playing for a cash prize and a place in the Main Stage Lineup. The evening will be headlined by two past Showcase Winners, *The Lonely Heartstring Band* (2013 winner) and *Beg, Steal, or Borrow* (2014 Winner) and the show will close with a performance by *Della Mae*.

Friday, Saturday, and Sunday feature an incredible lineup with a 12 hour stage show that runs from 10 am to 10 pm. The complete lineup of performers is available at the event website www.thomaspointbeachbluegrass.com. Some highlights of Friday's performers include 2019 Grammy nominee, *Sister Sadie*, 2018 IBMA Entertainers of the year *Balsam Range*, and 14 time Grammy winner *Béla Fleck with Abigail Washburn*.

Entertainment is what the Thomas Point Beach Bluegrass Festival is about and on Saturday the 2016 Grammy Winners, *The Steeldrivers* will bring their gritty vocal harmonies and fiery instrumentals to the stage! *Special Consensus* will play music from their 2019 Grammy nominated album "River & Roads", and the night will end with the aptly named "Queen of Bluegrass," *Rhonda Vincent*, who will join her band *The Rage* on stage both Saturday and Sunday. All time festival favorites, *The Gibson Brothers* will close the main stage show for the weekend on Sunday evening joining traditional favorites *Larry Stephenson*, *Danny Paisley*, and *The Grascals*, along with many others throughout the weekend.

The Main Stage is only part of the story with a complete lineup of instructional and artist workshops, family activities, guided jams, food and merchandise vendors, and after-hour sets rounding out the festivities. Watch for announcements to be made in coming months regarding additional celebratory events to mark the 40th anniversary.

Music starts at 1 pm Thursday, and 10 am Friday, Saturday and Sunday. The full line-up is available on-line. When the stage show is over, the best is yet to come, with the acoustic performances by the fire and under the stars and the best field picking anywhere!

Advanced Tickets are now available for a discount at thomaspointbeachbluegrass.com. Weekend tickets include camping. Children under 12 years of age are FREE and Teens (13-16) Pay 1/2 the Adult Rate with an adult. Please call or visit the website for complete event information and policies.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CALL THOMAS POINT BEACH 207-725-6009, EMAIL bluegrass@thomaspointbeach.com
or Visit the Web: www.thomaspointbeachbluegrass.com**

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**(Information provided by Thomas Point Beach, 207/725-6009 or bluegrass@thomaspointbeach.com
Photos available at <https://www.thomaspointbeachbluegrass.com/press-information/>.)**