

**NEWS RELEASE  
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**Big Pines Blues Festival announces youth contest finalists**

LONGVIEW, TEXAS – The Big Pines Blues Festival has announced the names of 15 finalists for the festival's "Junior Showcase" competition. The young guitar slingers will face off in head-to-head competition to determine the winners in two age groups on Saturday morning, June 3, on the Maude Cobb Rodeo Arena stage.

Contestants in Grades 6 through 8, along with their home towns, are: Ryan Groom, Kemp; Cody Lattis. Murchison; Harleigh Lodato. Athens; Ben Smiley. Larue; Elijah Thompson. Marshall; and Jackson Zemler. Lewisville.

Grade 9-12 hopefuls are: Will Beeman. Nashville, Tenn.; Kurtis Bell. Longview; Brody Blanton. Henderson; Derian Hadley. Canton; Ethan Kuntz. Murfreesboro, Ark.; Mathias Lattin. Houston; Liam McCabe. Grapevine; Noah McCray. Mount Vernon; and Grant Mcinnis, Bullard.

The aspiring musicians will each have a maximum stage time of four minutes, during which time their performances will be rated by a panel of professional musicians. Judges for the 2017 contest are: Ally Venable, Jimmy Wallace, Carter Wilkinson and guest judge Wes Jeans.

Junior Showcase producer Susanne McGee expressed satisfaction with the group of competitors. "We were pleased with the number of young players that applied this year, and I think anyone who hears them will agree, the level of talent they show is just amazing," she said.

Performances begin at 10:00 AM and admission is free and open to the public.

Following the competition performances and the announcement of winners the judges will take the stage to host the contestants in a blues jam. Junior Showcase activities will conclude by 1:00 PM.

The two-day Big Pines Blues Festival is produced by an IRS designated 501c(3) non-profit corporation whose mission is to showcase contemporary blues musicians, support music education and promote a strong future for 'The Blues' genre.

The festival is made possible by a grant from the City of Longview and by the generous support of local sponsors.

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