

Judges bring years of experience to the table

Judges for this year's Official Indiana State Picking & Fiddling Championships are D.R. Patton of Seymour, Vi Wickam of Newburgh, and Billy Joe Colwell of Michigan.

D.R. Patton

D.R. Patton previously served as a judge for the 2005 Official Indiana State Picking & Fiddling Championships. Raised in a musical family in Crawford County, he began playing music at age 12.

Over the course of his musical career, Mr. Patton has played as the staff musician at the Little Nashville Opry in Nashville, Ind., and at the Corydon Jamboree in Corydon.

He is also a former member of The Hayloft Frolic Show, which began in 1952 on WTTV in Bloomington (now Channel 4 in Indianapolis) and performed with the USO in 1957.

Vi Wickam

The oldest of three boys and the son of a banjo-playing plumber and a nurse,

Vi Wickam grew up in a bustling and rambunctious home filled with curious little boys and lots of homegrown music. In 1999, Vi graduated from the University of Evansville with a Bachelor's of Science degree in computer engineering.

When not playing old time music or teaching violin, he also manages On-Site Computer Solutions, a service-oriented computer consulting group. He is a husband and father of two wonderful children, Allie and Ryan.

Vi is a two-time Colorado State Fiddle Champion and placed 13th in the National Old Time Fiddle Contest in Weiser, Idaho.

In his "spare time," Wickam plays Violin and Viola (on occasion) for the Evansville String Quartet.

Over the summers, he enjoys competing and judging fiddle contests around the U.S. He has also served as the co-chair of the Newburgh Fiddler Fest in Newburgh.

This is Vi's second time to judge the Official Indiana State Picking & Fiddling Championships, having served

as a judge for the 2004 contest.

Billy Joe Colwell

Billy Joe Colwell is a native Hoosier with a lifelong love of bluegrass music. He grew up in Scottsburg and got his first guitar when he was 7 years old.

Billy Joe played in a bluegrass band with his father for several years prior to joining up with other groups such as the Patoka Valley Boys and Ron Stewart and Lonesome Road.

He toured nationally and internationally for six years with Gary Brewer and the Kentucky Ramblers before forming his own band — with friends Ron Stewart and Dale Taylor — called Little Creek.

Since 1998, he has enjoyed performing bluegrass gospel with his group, Uphill Climb.

Now a resident of Michigan, Billy Joe and his wife are the proud parents of a son, Caleb.

Billy Joe previously served as a judge for the 2006 Official Indiana State Picking & Fiddling Championships.

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