

Bill Wells Memorial Scholarship for Youth

2026 APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

About the 2026 Scholarships

The S.C. Bluegrass and Traditional Music Association is in its 11th year of awarding scholarships to young musicians from across the state of South Carolina. Named in memory of Bill Wells, the awards encourage and honor youth as they learn to play bluegrass or other traditional music on acoustic string instruments. The SCBTMA is a nonprofit organization that depends on donations and fundraisers to make the awards.

Applicants must play one of the six acoustic instruments listed on the attached application form. They must be in grades 7 through 12 during the 2026-2027 academic year. Applicants must live in South Carolina.

Besides bluegrass, applicants may play styles of traditional music such as old time, Celtic-style tunes, classic country, gospel, and folk. Past applicants who did not receive a scholarship may reapply.

The scholarships are cash awards. Award amounts will be based on the total number of applications received, the applicants' talents and potential, and the funds the SCBTMA has available this year. Winners are asked to spend their award money on music related activities and supplies.

Please Note These Important Dates

Friday, Nov. 6, 2026 – DEADLINE for electronic submission of student's Application Form, Letter(s) of Support, Brief Biography, and Video of applicant performing two songs. (See further instructions.)

Friday, Nov. 20 2026 – All applicants will be notified of the status of their application by this date.

Saturday, December 5, 2026 – PRESENTATION of Scholarships, 1 p.m. at Bill's Music Shop and Picking Parlor in West Columbia. All applicants are welcome to attend, along with their families and friends.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Applicants must submit all of the following by Nov. 6:

1. Application Form (single page).
2. One or more Letters of Support, including from your music instructor if possible, in PDF format.
3. A Brief Biography that addresses the 5 topics listed below, in PDF format.
4. A Video of you performing your two songs. Singing is optional. See further instructions below.

If you have questions, please send an email to BillWellsScholarship@gmail.com. Or you may call 803-237-2682. Be sure to mention "scholarship" if you leave a voice message.

TOPICS FOR YOUR BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

The applicant's "Brief Bio" should be typed. We suggest one paragraph for each of the 5 Topics below.

- A. Your Music Background. Please tell how you began playing your instrument and about the music you like to play. What do you like about bluegrass or other traditional music? Which musicians do you admire? If you sing, tell us about that too. Do you play other instruments? Include other information that you think is appropriate or interesting about your musical activities.

- B. How You Share Your Music. Who do you play music with or for? This could include recitals and performances, or playing with your brothers and sisters. Do you jam with friends (or anyone) or play with a group? Playing at church is great experience, as well as school clubs and groups.
- C. Helping Others to Learn. Describe if you have helped someone else to play a musical instrument or sing with you. This could be a sister, brother, another relative, or a friend or classmate. There are organizations that encourage students to teach others. Teaching can be formal or informal.
- D. Your Future Plans. Share any plans you have to keep playing music. Picture yourself in about two years, and what would you like to be doing musically? If you're close to graduation, do you want to pursue music afterwards? Maybe you'd like to teach, learn other instruments, try out for a school or a group, form your own group, or learn to play like a particular musician.
- E. Your Other Interests. Please share your interests, hobbies, hopes and dreams. If you think there is something especially interesting about you, please share!

GUIDELINES FOR MAKING YOUR VIDEO

Your video recording is a critical part of your application. We prefer the YouTube format, but will accept other formats if we are allowed easy access. Please review the important instructions below.

- An accompanist is not required, but we do encourage you to play with another person if you can. A good accompanist provides background that does not overpower the performer's playing or singing.
- Perform the two songs you listed on your application form.
- Songs must be complete, just as you would perform them live. Submitting only a portion of a song will result in lost points.
- The Selection Committee will evaluate your playing for intonation, tempo and technique. We also will judge your overall "stage presence."
- Introduce yourself clearly at the beginning of your video, and announce the songs you will perform.
- Your video volume needs to be sufficient that we can clearly hear you play. It's good if we can easily see your playing, too.
- Please review your video before submitting it to make sure it meets these guidelines. Also, make sure you are submitting the exact recording(s) you want the Selection Committee to review.

EMAILING YOUR APPLICATION

Submit your complete application, all four parts, in one email. Email it by Friday, Nov. 6, 2026, to:

BillWellsScholarship@gmail.com

An email confirmation of receipt will be sent to you within 48 hours. If you have not received a confirmation by Monday, Nov. 9, please send an email pointing this out to the same email address shown above. Or you may call 803-237-2682 and leave a message. Please mention "scholarship" in your message. General questions may also be emailed or telephoned to the above.

Thank you for your interest in the Bill Wells Memorial Scholarships!

S.C. BLUEGRASS & TRADITIONAL MUSIC ASSOCIATION
Bill Wells Memorial Scholarship for Youth in Bluegrass and Traditional Music

2026 APPLICATION FORM

Please review Instruction pages before starting application. This completed form, one or more Letters of Support, an applicant "Brief Biography," and a Video of two complete songs must be submitted electronically by Friday, November 6, 2026.

Applicant Name _____

By what name do you like to be called? _____

Street Address _____

Apt. _____ City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Phone Number _____

Email Address _____

Applicants must be in grades 7 to 12. Please check the grade you are in:

7th _____ 8th _____ 9th _____ 10th _____ 11th _____ 12th _____

How old are you? _____ Years

What school do you attend? _____

Please check if you home school. Yes, I home school. _____

Note: Applicants will be rated on their playing of one of the 6 acoustic string instruments listed below. On your Video, you are required to play two songs on this instrument. See Instructions for more about your Video.

What instrument will you play for this application? Check one.

Fiddle _____ Guitar _____ Banjo _____ Mandolin _____ Dobro _____ Bass _____

How long have you been playing this instrument? _____ Years

Note: If you play more than one of the above instruments, or any other instrument, please tell us about it in your Brief Biography.

What are the two songs you will play on this instrument on your Video?

Song 1 _____

Song 2 _____