



STAFFLINES

Monthly Newsletter of the Tidewater Music Teachers Forum



Diane Higgins

Our Students Have Something to Say!

Exploring Student Creativity in Your Studio from Start to Finish



Friday, October 16th, 2026

Location: Jordan Kitt's Music

5164 Virginia Beach Blvd.

Virginia Beach, VA

10:00 - Buisness Meeting and Workshop

12:00 - Lunch

Biography: Diane W. Higgins is an Independent Piano and Composition Instructor, and she has maintained a music studio in the Charlotte area for over 35 years. She earned her Bachelor of Music degree in Piano Performance at Salem College, where she studied piano with Clemmons Sandresky, music theory and composition with composer Margret Vardell Sandresky, and piano pedagogy with Margret Mueller. Diane has also been a violin member with the Charlotte Symphony, Winston-Salem Symphony, and Charlotte Civic Orchestra. As a promoter of teaching composition in the studio. Diane has been invited to present composition sessions to MTNA National Conferences in 2024 (ATL) and 2012 (NYC), State MTA Conferences, pedagogy classes at universities and colleges, local associations, private music schools, and independent teacher's studios. Her composition students have won first place prizes in state, regional, national and international competitions, and several of these compositions were published in the National Piano Explorer Magazine. Diane is currently completing a book on teaching composition in the music studio. Diane has received Steinway's 2025 Top Teacher Award, the NCMTA Teacher of the Year Award (2012), and the UNCG Summer Music Camp Hall of Fame Award (2012). In 2007, she was declared a MTNA Foundation Fellow recipient. Diane has served on the MTNA National Board of Directors, the MTNA National Nominating Committee, and as a National Chair of the MTNA Local Associations Forum. Diane served as both President and Director of MTNA Southern Division. She is ast President of NCMTA, Charlotte Piano Teachers Forum, and Friends of Music at Queens University of Charlotte. She has also served as a board member with the Friends of Music at Salem College, Charlotte Music Club, Charlotte MTA, nad she was founder/director of the Charlotte Music Career Fair. For 30 years, Diane has served as an adjudicator for piano, violin, and composition competitions in both North and South Carolina. Her articles and eleven book reviews are published in the American Music Teacher national magazine

Workshop Description: Have you ever had a student who wanted to compose a piece of music... but did not know how? Has a student ever walked into your studio, and wanted to play a piece that he/she had mde up in their head? Do you ever have students who "fool around" on the piano... when they should be practicing their assignment? If so... well, this session is for you! Come learn how to get your studio ready for teaching composition! You will learn how to get started, develop tips for sparking creative ideas, secure equiptment on a budget, explore composition contests, and launch your own composition camp!



President's Letter October 2026

I would like to extend a heartfelt "THANKS" to all who assisted in getting TMTF's 62nd year off to such a great start. What a wonderful group of teachers we have, and how generous they are to share their time and talents to keep this organization thriving and healthy. It does, indeed, take a village!

It was an honor to have composer and educator Dennis Alexander with us in September. He was so engaging and inspired us with many new works and teaching tips. Thanks to Alfred Publishing Company and to Music and Arts for their sponsorship and efforts to assist us with needed materials, and to Diehn School of Music for the use of their facilities. Special shoutouts to Susan Atkins for her work with the two masterclass programs, to Josh Miller for the beautiful TMTF workshop poster, and to Pat Kennedy for making phone calls to our members and for the fall decorations and beautiful mums.

The Studio Companion looks so nice, and I am so proud of the work that Emily Denniston and Bethany Jacobs have done. It is very user-friendly and wonderful that members may now access it as a digital copy or, if desired, can still request and obtain a printed copy.

Laura Cardin and Mun Lee Han- Thank you both for everything that you do behind the scenes to keep things running smoothly. You are both always so helpful in so many ways and we are so lucky to have you! TMTF also has a dedicated Executive Board and many chairmen of our events who are always eager to assist. Reminder that our next Executive Board meeting is a virtual meeting on October 2, and we will continue to discuss several important issues for the upcoming year.

I am also so proud of the work that Zooey Cusher is doing for us for our Stafflines- thank you for creating and sending these important monthly issues to our teachers.

And as always, thank you to the members who support, attend, and participate in TMTF's many workshops, masterclasses, and student events. It is necessary for any active organization to have volunteer members. Know that we are always glad to see you, to hear how you are doing, and we encourage you to get involved.

I look forward to our October 16 TMTF workshop, and encourage you to attend the VMTA State Conference October 22-24 at Liberty University.

Best,
Sally

Glover Scholarship Auditions

The Glover Scholarship Auditions were held on April 22, 2026 at Monumental United Methodist Church in Portsmouth. We had seven teachers enter students in the event this year. Twenty-eight students auditioned and fourteen won a monetary award within grades 5 through 8. These awards included a first place of \$400, a second place of \$350, and a third place of \$300, and honorable mention awards of \$200 in each school grade. A Joan Moore Memorial Award of \$100 was also given to an eighth grader. Teachers who had student winners this year include Laura Cardin, Joan Edwards, Susan Grice, Mun Lee Han, Mary Ann Medlin and Josephine Jones.

We appreciate all of you who supported this event as well as the Play-A-Thon which continues to fund this scholarship. A very special “Thank You” to all of you who judged for us that day.



TMTF Play-A-Thon



Our 20 th Anniversary of the TMTF Play-A-Thon was a great success this past December of 2025.

The final amount of pledge money collected was \$5,479.00. There were 105 students representing 11 teachers who participated in this event. All of your efforts to work with your students that enabled them to perform and contribute deserves an enormous “Thank You”.

This money is used to keep our three TMTF scholarship programs solvent. The students who won a monetary award for raising the most amount of pledge money for this event are all from Joan Edwards’ studio. Thank you Joan for your hard work! They brought in \$500, \$400 and \$130 respectively. First place students were awarded \$100, second place \$75 and third place \$50.

Congratulations and a special thank you to the teachers whose students raised over \$600. They are Joan Edwards (\$1,340), Susan Atkins (\$1,000), Josephine Jones (\$625), and Mary Ann Medlin (\$605). I would like to give a special “shout out” to Elizabeth Smith, the Co-Chairman, for her wonderful help during the event. Many thanks again to all of you who supported our 20 th Anniversary of this three day event and helped it to be a success!

Lynn Kleisler, NCTM
Chairman



2025-2026 TMTF Achievement Award Report

One hundred seven students of 5 TMTF teachers were enrolled in the 2025-2026 Achievement Award Program. TMTF Achievement Awards were presented to 20 students of 5 TMTF Teachers in 2026. The teachers were Susan Atkins, Donna Halleck, Mun Lee Han, and Josephine Jones

1st Achievement Award

Jack Anthony
Sabrina Brouillard
Caden Gambito
Kevin Lin
Paxton Lin
Eva McCormick
Kayla McCormick
Arantxa Mendoza
Alexis Morales
Adrian Orozco
Morgan Ratcliffe
Thomas Shi
Nora Unnikrishnan
Leila Unnikrishnan

2nd Achievement Award

Emma Chow
Ava Salib
Aaron Tran
Kyan Yuan

4th Achievement Award

Andrew Chow
Anisha Warusavitharana

Please encourage your students to participate in TMTF, VMTA or MTNA events and enroll in the TMTF Achievement Award Program this year.

Josephine Jones, NCTM
Achievement Award Chairperson



2027 VTMA Theory Test

It's time to get ready for the 2027 VTMA Theory Test!

Location: Old Dominion University

Webb Center

1301 W 49 St

Norfolk, VA 23529

Date: January 30, 2027

Registration Deadline: December 18, 2026

Registration Fee: \$15.00

Co-Chair: Susan Atkins, NCTM

4357 Biscayne Drive, Virginia Beach VA 23455

(757) 282-8220

pianolearningcenter@gmail.com

Co-Chair: Sally Copeland

(757) 376-7348

srcopela@odu.edu

Theory test completion required to participate in the VMTA District Auditions
Written exam and Listening, levels Primer-12, based on musical knowledge (not school grade).

For detailed instructions and registration form, please see the 2026-2027 Studio Companion

How to prepare your students:

The Theory Syllabus, sample tests, answer keys and audio files can be found on the VMTA website in the Member Area.

Please let me know if you cannot access the website and/or need hard copies of these documents.

Susan Atkins, NCTM

LETS GET CERTIFIED!

NOW THERE ARE ONLY TWO MONTHLY MTNA CERTIFICATION MEETINGS

VMTA has a new Certification Chair - Rene Johnson.

She is holding monthly meetings on Google Meet. Always on Monday nights at 8:00 and always just 1 hour.

VMTA Certification Meetings:

- October 19
- November 16
- January 25
- February 22
- March 15
- April 19
- May 17
- June 21

TMTF Certification Meetings:

- October 9
- November 6
- January 8
- February 5
- March 5
- April 16
- May 14

Contact Rene Johnson at r@renej.us to ask for an invite.

Even if you are only thinking of getting certified and just have questions, please come to any meetings that fit your schedule.

If you can pay the \$200 fee upfront, when you complete the process, TMTF and VMTA will refund the fee. (Ask me for details)

You don't know where to start? Come to the next TMTF meeting on October 9 at 10:00 am - it's on Zoom!

Find out more at www.certification.mtna.org.

Have questions? Ask me anything!

TMTF Certification Meeting

Friday, October 9, 2026

10:00-11:30 AM

Zoom

Please Contact Susan Atkins to receive a Zoom invite to the meeting!

VMTA Certification Meeting

Monday, October 19, 2026

8:00-9:00 PM

Google Meets

Contact Rene Johnson to receive a Zoom invite to the meeting

r@renej.us

Need Students?

Want to refer students?

Look no further than the TMTF website:

www.tmtf.org

You can submit your contact information and teacher profile to our webmaster:

Mun Lee Han

munleehan@gmail.com

If you need to refer a student, simply give them the website

address: www.tmtf.org - it's that easy

TMTF CALENDAR

October

- 2- TMTF Executive Board Meeting
(Zoom or Google Meet) 10 AM
- 2-3 - NC State Conference at ECU
- 9 - TMTF Certification Meeting
- 12 - Columbus Day
- 16 - DEADLINE - Sacred Music Festival
- 16 - TMTF Meeting/Workshop**
- 21 - DEADLINE - Staffline News
- 31 - Halloween
- 22-24 - VMTA Conference



November

- 1- DEADLINE - Achievement Award Registration
- 1- Daylight Savings (move clocks back 1 hour)
- 7- DEADLINE - TMTF Student Recital - VA Beach
- 6 - TMTF Certification Meeting
- 13- DEADLINE - Play A Thon
- 20- TMTF Meeting/Workshop
- 21- Sacred Music Festival - Thalia Lynn Baptist Church, VA Beach
- 21- Harold Protsman Piano Competition at ODU
- 22- Student Recital - VA Beach - Coastal Unitarian/Universalists Church
- TBD- Student Recital - Portsmouth
- 26- Thanksgiving Day

Birthdays!

October

- 11 Ashley Frye
- 15 Mary Taylor
- 15 Joshua Miller
- 21 Elizabeth Smith

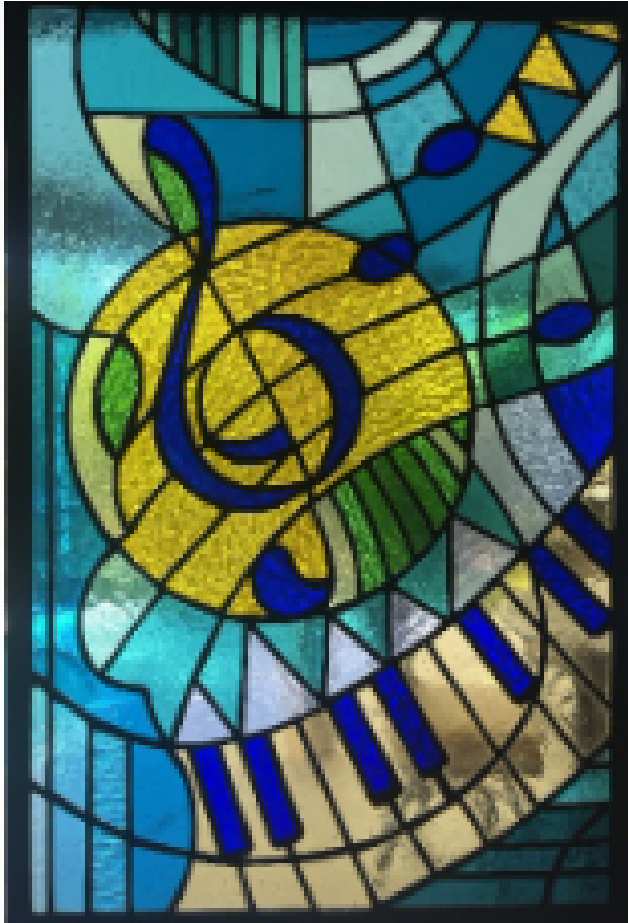
November

- 1 Geraldine Pearson
- 1 Carol Cook
- 6 Lonell Riddick



Sacred Music Festival

It's our first TMTF event of the Fall!



This is the best opportunity for your students in all levels, from beginners to advanced, to prepare pieces for Play-A-Thon, Christmas Revitals, church offertories, preludes and specials without the pressure of memorization

This event will be held at Thalia Lynn Baptist Church on Virginia Beach Blvd on Saturday, November 21, 2026.

You can find the instructions and Registration form in our TMTF Studio Companion Book. The deadline for *registration is October 17, 2026*.

If you're searching for good music to use, I highly recommend Wendy Steven's *Hymns I, II, and III* (www.Composecresate.com) And *Play Hymns* - from Alfred.com.

Don't let this event pass you by! Get Involved!

Donna Halleck
Sacred Music Festival Chariperson



Y A M A H A

JORDAN www.jordankitts.com
Kitt's music

A proud supporter of the Tidewater Music Teachers Forum for over a half century!

Jordan Kitt's Music has been a partner of local music education for decades, and is Tidewater's home of the best piano values

Area representatives of Yamaha,
Bösendorfer, Cristofori, Roland & More...
Sales • Service • Tunings • Lessons • Rentals

5164 Virginia Beach Boulevard
Virginia Beach, VA 23462
(757) 497-8929

Stafflines Advertising Rates

The following advertising rates are for Stafflines news that is not related directly to TMTF activities. Two to three line announcement such as a recital or job opening : No Fee

One half page (8.5" x 5.5") : \$10.00

Full page (8.5" x 11") : \$20.00

Make check payable to TMTF and send along with your ad to the Stafflines Editor

Piano Showcase
pianoshowcaseva.com
Greenbrier Mall

J. Scott Bailey
President

(757) 420-1130
(757) 714-3307 Cell
pianoshowcaseva@yahoo.com

KAWAI



Tidewater Music Teachers Forum

Local Chapter of the Virginia Music Teachers Association Affiliated with the Music Teachers National Association

Zoocy Cusher, Editor | 31 Sinton Road | Newport News, VA 23601