

CLINKER



BREAKER

Florida Artist Blacksmith Association

Established May 18, 1985

Mark Your Calendars! FABACon 2026, Oct. 16-18

FABACon 2026 is coming! We're returning to the Best Western Gateway Grand in Gainesville on Oct. 16-18. Save the date and stay tuned in the coming months for information on schedule, pricing and hotel reservations.

Regional Challenge

Balance and Motion (with literal motion)

Exchange Item

Something that whirls, twirls or spins



Roses in bloom in Orlando

The Greater Orlando Region made roses during their Feb. 14 meeting.

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In Memoriam



Ben Ferguson, FABA Founder
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Upcoming Events



Bearded Brotherhood Ball
February 27- March 1, page 4



Induction Forge Workshop
March 21-22, page 5

Regional Events & Information



FABA has eight regions, and regular meetings are held in each region on the following Saturdays of each month: 1st Saturday—Central NE / 2nd Saturday—NW & Greater Orlando / 3rd Saturday—SE & Gainesville / 4th Saturday—Far West & SW.

The NNE meetings will be the 2nd or 3rd Saturdays (depending on the month).

The regions have no boundaries – everyone is welcome everywhere. Come to more than one if you can!

The dates may vary, so check the schedule noted in the Regional Reports or on Facebook, or contact the Regional Coordinator.

Our meetings are informal gatherings around the forge. Prospective members are always welcome. Come for all or any part of a meeting, bring your tools or just watch. Most meetings run from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., and you'll want to bring a bag lunch if not otherwise noted. If you have any questions about events, please check the region's Facebook page or contact the Regional Coordinators:

Greater Orlando Region	John Hare	802-373-1190	legacy.john.hare@gmail.com
Gainesville Region	Jordan Borstelmann	352-727-8260	crookedpathforge@gmail.com
Central Northeast Region	William Thornton	386-916-6117	knifegsx@yahoo.com
North Northeast Region	Doug Hayes	910-330-7601	djhayes29@hotmail.com
Northwest Region	John Pfund	850-528-3280	johnwpfund@aol.com
Southeast Region	Peter Hill	651-635-6022	blazeblades561@gmail.com
Southwest Region	Antony Fenn	617-320-4781	antony.fenn@gmail.com
Far West Region	Christopher Sandlin	850-865-9596	Chris@traditionsworkshop.com

Florida Artist Blacksmith Association (FABA) is a nonprofit organization chartered with the state of Florida that is dedicated to promoting and expanding the horizons of architectural, artistic and practical blacksmithing while preserving the rich heritage of this craft.

FABA Officers and members assume no responsibility or liability for injuries or damage caused as a result of the use of any information, materials, design, techniques, etc., contained in this newsletter; our website, www.blacksmithing.org; our Facebook Page at www.facebook.com/FloridaBlacksmiths; any of our regional Facebook pages; or provided at meetings or demonstrations.

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FABA member & conference news

I have a couple of things to cover this month, first the hard part – Many of you might already know from Facebook and other social media platforms that blacksmith Ben Ferguson of Freeport, FL, recently passed away.

I remember Ben as he would come by my shop from time to time to purchase coal and to shoot the breeze. It was always a great visit.

He was one of a kind with a southern drawl that always kept the conversation moving. I particularly recall his efforts to educate me on the finer points of forge welding with a hydraulic press.

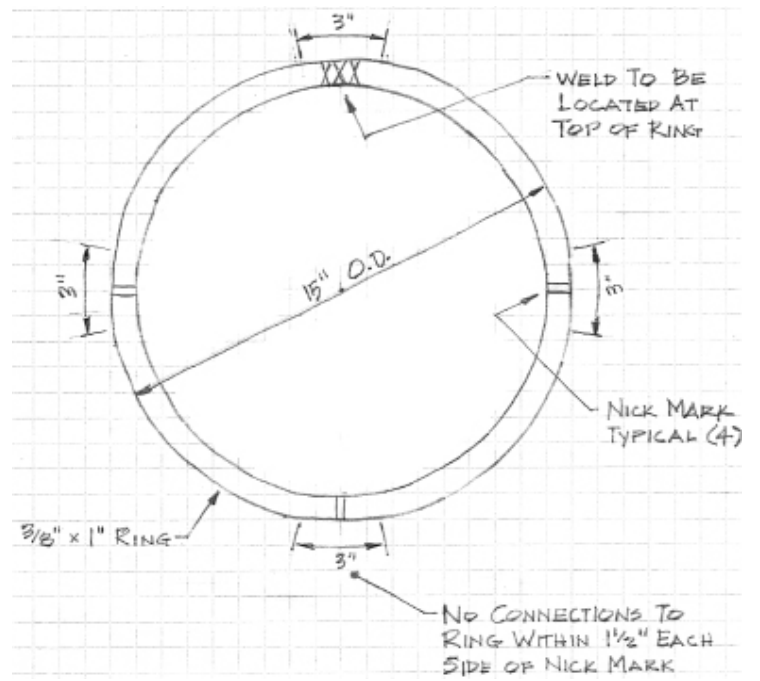
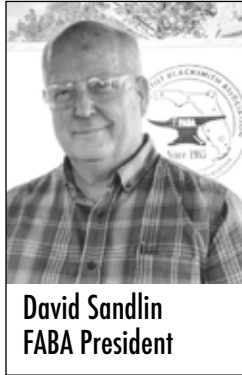
You wouldn't know it at the time but he carried the scars of battle from Vietnam 50 years ago, almost lost his arm, but it never showed and he never complained either. That was just his nature. Rolling with the punches and moving on. By the way, he was very much a history buff, a Civil War reenactor and a founding member of the Florida Artist Blacksmith Association. He will be missed. We will ring the anvil for him on Saturday, October 17th.

Yes, the conference is coordinated with Best Western in Gainesville again this year and the dates will be October 16-18. Expect the reservation link for the hotel to go hot any day now. The program team has negotiated us a great rate for the days of the conference. Lisa Anne will have more to say about the conference in next month's *Clinker Breaker*, but I'm already looking forward with anticipation. In fact I'm making my own cutlery for the conference dinner. If you want to do the same, I'm planning to teach a class on Friday morning (Oct. 16) for making a simple fork/knife/spoon set for the table. Or I suppose you could just bring two pieces of tapered round stock and call them chop sticks; to each their own.

This year's conference will hopefully bring to culmination several great projects and challenges. The regional challenge, "Motion and Balance," has already got several teams energized. I know in the Far West, we've already started work and have made a model that I'm sure will change a dozen time before the final piece gets to show, but at least we have a start. The gift exchange, "Something that spins or twirls," has also generated a few novel ideas, some practical and some fanciful. But I'd like to bring your focus to the President's challenge.

SBA has asked for the seven member organizations to

produce one ring with the state flower or tree to represent of each of the member's states. I have opened this challenge up to everyone and anyone in FABA who wishes to participate, to create a Florida themed ring in time for this October's conference. At the conference, we will select the best ring by way of "People's Choice" to send on to SBA. The rest of the rings will be collared together as a showcase piece for FABA to travel around and be displayed at fairs, festivals, arts centers and regional meetings to inspire and motivate, and eventually to be a piece for auction in 2027. See the design details in the attached drawings.



Finally, let's close with some good financial news. Our organization has built back to, and now exceeds, our pre-2020 levels. This year's "top line" budget as approved by the board covers all our usual expenses, and goes on to significantly augment our conference budget. It sends \$600 in funds to all eight of our regions and increases the number of \$1,000 scholarships we will award. This year, we have awarded three (yes, 3!) \$1,000 scholarships, and in the fall, we plan to award at least 2 more. Think about some training you'd like to receive to further your blacksmith/metal working skills and get your name in! Additionally, we are continuing to offer our military scholarships. Please don't leave money sitting on the table.

Until next month, I hope and pray your anvil rings true.

PS. I'm still looking for your touchmark. There is a lot of empty space on the Member Touchmark board.

— David Sandlin, President

2026 Bearded Brotherhood Ball

Feb 27-March 1, 9AM till we get too tired to stand

Address: 12701 NE 135 ST, Fort McCoy FL 32134

The Bearded Brotherhood is holding their annual ball, and all FABA Members are invited, should they dare.

The 2026 Bearded Brotherhood Ball is coming, and this year we're stripping it down, firing it up, and taking it Back to Basics.

We're heading to Justin Miller's place for the last weekend of February.

This year isn't about big classes, big crowds, or big production. It's about what started this whole damn Brotherhood in the first place: Open forges. Good steel. Good people. Learning by doing. Smiting hot shite with your friends.

There's no registration fee, no set class schedule. We'll have cans (or hats if we forget the cans) out for donations. Pay what you can or what you believe you should. Those funds help cover materials, the cost of getting this circus together, and whatever's left will go right into the Brotherhood pot to help our own when life kicks them in the teeth.

We'll have experienced smiths manning the open forges, ready to help you make whatever your heart desires: blades, hooks, bottle openers, questionable art... whatever. If you want to learn, someone will be there to teach.

We'll have a group project made up of smaller parts. Folks will be divided up into groups to each work on their own part. Nothing brings the Brotherhood together like standing around the anvil and building something as a team.



Food is bring-your-own-damn-food. Drinks too, but do drink plenty of beer. We may have issues with water access, so there's a good chance you'll need to help piss the fire out!

This Ball isn't about going big. It's about going home. Back to the roots, back to the forge, back to the Brotherhood.

Camping available, bring your own gear!

Upcoming Events



Induction Forge Workshop and Seminar

**March 21-22, 8am to 5pm Sat & Sun
Fever Metal Art Center (Leslie Tharp shop)
Gainesville, FL**

www.blacksmithing.org/regions/2026-spring-workshop

This event will be hosted as a collaboration between Fever Metal Art Center and the Florida Artist Blacksmith Association (FABA) NE Regions, featuring special guests Scott Kretschmer and Evan Blackstock from the Rocky Mountain Smiths.

The visiting smiths will lead two workshops and afternoon seminars focused on the benefits of Induction Forging technology. They will demonstrate the use of induction forging technology and lead two morning workshops focused on setting up and modifying the equipment for safety and coil building. There will be hands-on opportunities for registrants in the afternoon as space and equipment availability allows.

Registration to the 8-5 Sat/ Sun event:

* Registration payments will be taken on site during the event (cash/card options will be available).

Advance RSVP is required. Please use this link <https://www.blacksmithing.org/regions/2026-spring-workshop>

FABA Members - \$15

Nonmembers - \$20

Workshops - \$25 each day (\$45 to attend both days)

* workshops are limited to 8 participants

Schedule

Saturday, March 21:

8-12pm - WORKSHOP 1 - Scott Kretschmer and Evan Blackstock from the Rocky Mountain Smiths will lead a coil building workshop (materials provided with registration fee)

Noon - Lunch Break

1-3pm - SEMINAR & DISCUSSION - Scott Kretschmer and Evan Blackstock from the Rocky Mountain Smiths will discuss benefits of the induction forge will go over setting up and modifying the equipment for safety.

3-5pm - DEMO / Hands On Opportunities - FABA member demo, or group build project using induction forges

Sunday, March 22:

8-12pm - WORKSHOP 2 - Scott Kretschmer and Evan Blackstock from the Rocky Mountain Smiths will lead a coil building workshop (materials provided with registration fee)

Noon - Lunch Break

1-3pm - SEMINAR & DISCUSSION - Scott Kretschmer and Evan Blackstock from the Rocky Mountain Smiths will continue the discussion on the benefits of the induction forge will go over setting up and modifying the equipment for safety.

3-5pm - DEMO / Hands On Opportunities - FABA member demo, or group build project using induction forges



Central NE Meeting, March 7th

We had a great meeting for the month of February, where we had open forges and went over forge welding basics. Our next meeting will be on March 7th at Barberville Pioneer Settlement from 9am until 4pm, where we will have open forges. As always, lunch will be provided. Hope to see you there!

Please check the FABA NE Facebook page for more info at facebook.com/groups/381431599058683/, or contact William Thornton at knifegsx@yahoo.com.

— William Thornton, Central NE Coordinator



NW Region Report

Hello everyone and greetings from the Northwest region. The Northwest region had our February meeting at the home of Mark and Shelley Mason, and 28 people signed in. Mark's "Low Country Boil" was delicious, and along with everything else people brought, was a go-back-through-the-line-again kind of meal. Maybe best ever, it's hard to say, we've had a lot of good ones.

We had lots of heart shaped designs in the "Iron in the Hat" donations for the raffle. Thanks for all who participated. I brought the new "Tong making" box to the meeting and a couple of pairs of tongs were made. I'll be bringing it to meetings regularly now to use for open forges.

NW Region Meeting, March 14

Our March meeting will be on the 14th at the home of Ken and Linda Weldon. We're going to be making charcoal in the charcoal making device known as "Mr Charcoal Maker Jr" and I'll be making hamburgers and hotdogs on the grill. I'll have the tong making box and ask for a couple of volunteers to show us how it's done. Please bring sides and desserts and something to donate for the raffle. The address is 21 W.A. Rogers Rd. Monticello, FL. 32344. I hope to see you there!

— John Pfund, NW Region Coordinator

SW Region Meeting, March 7

The Southwest Region meeting will be on Saturday, March 7th, starting at 9:30am, at Heritage Village, Largo, FL, near St Petersburg.

We will be working on making punches and drifts as a donation to support the village forge. Trez Cole will demo what is needed and materials will be provided if you want to have a go. As usual wear appropriate clothing. If you want to forge, a waiver will need a signature. Bring something for iron in the hat and also something to share for a pot luck lunch.

Heritage Pioneer Village in Largo FL

Address: 11909 125th Street, Largo, Florida 33774

The forge is a pole barn about 30 feet long and the 3 forges are under the roof and there's plenty of seating, picnic tables, bathrooms and a big parking lot.

Please check www.facebook.com/groups/228279738123674, or contact antony.fenn@gmail.com.

— Tony Fenn, SW Region Coordinator

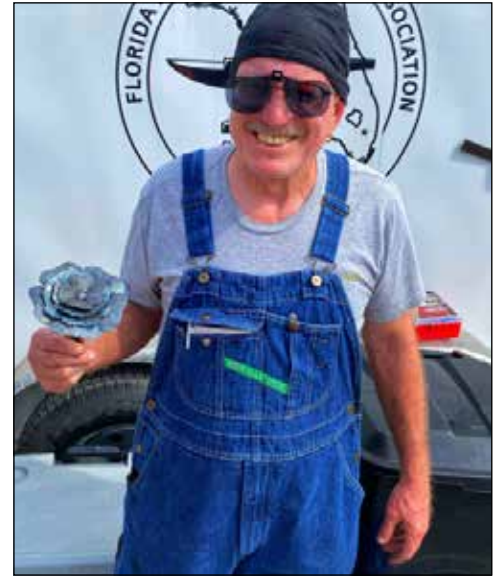
Regional Reports

Orlando Meeting Report

The Orlando Region had a great meeting with everyone taking home a completed rose. We used plasma cut blanks that we then textured in the coal forge, a 10 inch or so piece of 1/4 rod with a rivet on one end and a weld on the underside. Big shout out to Chris, Cormac and James, who helped keep an eye on things as I bounced around between welding and making my own rose. Chris was especially helpful as he has made some roses recently and had some tips on texturing methods. We used rounding hammers, ball peen and a cross peen with the cross peens giving a final pass.

Once things were forged out and welded, we either used a MAP gas torch or set the roses back on the coal forge to heat the petals back up for shaping. Some also chose to texture the stem as well.

Big thank you to Jason Becker at UnderGround Metal Works, who sponsored the meeting with the purchase of materials and cutting of the blanks on his plasma table. If anyone is looking to brush up or learn some welding skills, make sure to check them out on Facebook!



Orlando Meeting, April 11

Our next meeting will be April 11th at 9AM as I will be attending Gulf Wars in Mississippi in March. See you all then!

Meeting date: April 11th, 9AM-1PM
Location: Underground MetalWorks, 660 W Kennedy Blvd., Suite A, Orlando, FL 32810

For information, contact John Hare at 802-373-1190 or legacy.john.hare@gmail.com.

— **John Hare, Orlando Region Coordinator**



Far West Meeting Report

Our January 24th meeting got underway shortly after 9 a.m. with a series of quick reminders about the 2026 gift exchange (something that twists and turns) and regional competition project (motion and balance).

We also advised our region members that conference would probably be at the Best Wester Gateway Grand on October 16-18 ... which turned out to be a pretty good guess since the conference location and dates have now been announced and they are (drum roll) at the Best Wester Gateway Grand on October 16-18.

Our team then launched into a lengthy discussion on what we should do for our regional competition project. We are not going to reveal our hand, but this year we have a solid design and a bit of a plan as to how we will build it.

To close the formal part of the meeting, Christopher Sandlin demonstrated techniques of forge welding.

Once the formal part of our meeting was over, everyone took advantage of the open forges to work on their own projects. Some continued to work on forge welding with Christopher coaching them. Others worked on ABANA Level I projects. Jessica Sandlin worked on her twists in preparation of her gift exchange item. We had one of our Rocky Bayou Christian School students come back for some more hands-on blacksmith experience, crafting a sickle. Several people worked on knives.

Lunch was provided by Traditions Workshop, enchiladas with a backup of all-beef hot dogs for anyone who showed up late.

However, we almost had a meal of fresh chicken as there is a small flock of the birds who make regular rounds in the neighborhood



of our shop every day right around lunch time.

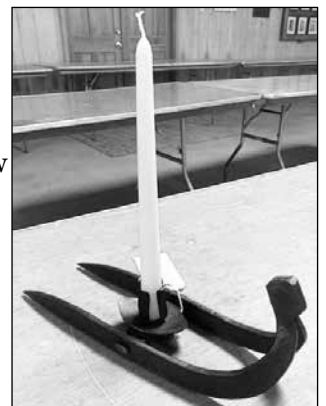
Christopher Mallet saw the chickens, declared he was hungry, grabbed Christopher Sandlin's Dane Axe and proceeded to stalk after the un-suspecting hens. Just as he was getting close enough for the kill, the rooster sounded the alarm and all the birds scattered with Mr. Mallet in hot pursuit – and falling behind. Chris had hot dogs for lunch.



On the plus side for Mr Mallet, he did get to show off five knives he was working on; they were almost complete, just a little more polish and they will be ready for friends and family. He also crafted a very fine letter opener shaped like a feather of the rooster that got away.

Far West Meeting, Feb. 21

The next meeting for the Far West will be Feb. 21st at 9 a.m. at Traditions Workshop. We will have a guest demonstrator – Jordan Thomas! He will show us how he crafted the Viking Ship Candle holder that he accomplished at SBA in 2025. Pre-cut parts will be available for anyone who wants to try their hand at this very cool project.



Far West Meeting Schedule

The Far West Region's March meeting (March 28) will be at John Butler's family farm, and this is our traditional fundraising event. We will have 12 slots for the Viking era knife class. We will need several members to volunteer their time as safety observers.

This event is often attended by non-FABA members and it is a great opportunity for us to encourage them to join the organization. Thank you again to John Butler for hosting this event.

Our April meeting will be on April 26th at a location to be announced. Usually, this is an event held out in the community, and we are looking for a local sponsor. Sponsorship entails nothing more than providing us a place to set up.

Remember that our gift exchange item this year something that spins. There will be a demonstration on how to make a corkscrew, but I hope you have some other ideas on things that spin and you can make them during the session.

Our event in May will occur at Timber Creek distillery. Set-up starts at 9 AM, and we will be focused on yet another one of the journeyman standards.

These are always a good meetings because Timber Creek distillery is a great host and they have a fantastic pizza oven. They also encourage us to bring items that we wish to leave with them to sell for us. This is the first meeting that we plan to seriously start construction on our competition project for FABACON 26.

June 27 location is still to be determined, but this is the Saturday after Midsomer, so you can expect us to demonstrate a project inspired by that Scandinavian holiday. July 25 and August 22 are too far for us to give you a reasonable forecast.

September 26 will be at Traditions Workshop, and we will be packing the trailer in anticipation of the conference in Gainesville on October 16-18.

November will find us back at Timber Creek distillery for our annual competition once again. We don't have a hard date for this yet, but November 7th looks like a good candidate.

Sounds like Far West will have a great year at the Forge and a number of wonderful learning opportunities.

— **David Sandlin, FABA President**

In Memoriam

Ben Ferguson, FABA founder

Ben Ferguson of Freeport, FL, a founding member of the Florida Artist Blacksmith Association, recently passed away.

According to a report by *The South Alabamian* published on Feb. 11, Ferguson, of Freeport, Fla., was a longtime historical reenactor and was a Pioneer Day craftsman at the Grove Hill event for 20 or more years.

“He was skilled at pioneer blacksmithing and wood carving, including his popular dough bowls.

“As a reenactor, he portrayed pioneer settlers and soldiers from the 1700s to the Civil War years of the 1860s.”

A post on the Fort Mims Facebook page stated: “Ben loved Ft Mims and all early history. He was an accomplished blacksmith and held working conferences at his ‘compound’ in Florida. He made the hardware for the blockhouse in 2013, carved an amazing replica for a pulley that included the iron hardware and had planned to build the second well at Ft Mims.”

Mr. Ferguson was involved in the blacksmithing community not only through FABA, but also through the Alabama Forge Council and Wiregrass Forge.



Ben Ferguson hosting the Wiregrass - Alabama Forge Council blacksmith meeting in early 2020. Photo by Dot Butler

North NE Meeting Report

The North Northeast region had a fun and busy day at Iron Osprey Forge on Feb. 7th. Two first timers joined in and got their first taste of smithing after watching Doug demonstrate turning a horseshoe into a steak flipper.

There were two basic themes for the day: horseshoes as source material and various twists. Inspired by a recent video from Black Bear Forge, Doug prepped three different effects for some ½ inch square bar.

One bar had alternating holes 1/8" and 3/16 spaced approx. 1 inch apart. Another had 1/8-inch holes with standard rivets (which were a tad short, so one head was domed, the other mostly flat). And a third bar with 1/8" holes that he filled with copper grounding wire. Each bar was twisted and then had two treatments. One half was wire brushed to a shiny polish while the other still had the oxidation and then they were sealed with a clear acrylic to compare the visual results.

The bar with the 'empty' holes ended up shearing in the middle at a larger hole and the sharp crease effect that Black Bear Forge attained was not nearly as pronounced. Opinions varied on the results but all agreed it was an interesting exercise.

The twisting theme was also applied to the steak flipper and instead of a square twist, Doug broke the corners to create an octagon with two sizes of faces - the corners were approx 1/3 of the larger flat faces.

After the demo, Doug took the new folks to the coal forges and worked with them, Emmanuel provided some expertise with a FABA member working on a RR spike knife, and Dan, Gui, and his son Zane pounded some horseshoes to create a small knife and a couple of heart sculptures.

North NE Meeting, March 7

Our March meeting will also be shifted to the first Saturday, March 7th, at Iron Osprey Forge, 102 Marshall Circle. The topic is still undecided but we also have the joint NNE and Gainesville Induction forge demo and workshop on March 21-22 at Leslie Tharp's shop in Gainesville.

April will be an exciting meeting as we go across town to the shop of Blaise Morrell of Hands on Metal Design, a blacksmith who also has a lot of experience making and casting brass, bronze and aluminum. On April 11 at his shop at 134 Riberia Street (unit 9) in St. Augustine, we'll have a demo of the entire casting process from 9AM to noon, along with a light potluck meal and Iron in the Hat. That afternoon, Blaise will teach a workshop "Introduction to Casting" where up to 8 students will prep, mold and cast one of five options. The fee for that workshop will be \$50



and includes all materials and equipment. Students will also learn how to clean and polish their pieces. Register for the class at www.Iron-Osprey-Designs.com. (Search for Casting workshop and tab to the April 11 date.) A portion of the fee will go to FABA and the remainder covers the materials and instructor cost.

As an added bonus, the shop is located right on the water. The view is great, and we may even see some dolphins.

Hammer on!!

— Doug Hayes, North NE Coordinator

Announcements



Volunteer Blacksmiths Needed

Heritage Village in Largo, FL, is looking for volunteer artist blacksmiths to demonstrate blacksmithing in our Old Homestead Forge circa 1850s, using traditional tools and methods, no power tools. Our schedule runs the first three Saturdays of the month and the last Sunday.

We have several openings for February and March.

If you are interested, contact Jay Dugan at ramforgeworks@gmail.com or 727-480-5611.

FABA Veterans Scholarship

The FABA Veterans' Scholarship Fund was established to help veterans to experience the world of blacksmithing. The intent is to assist veterans to get started in the craft with an experienced teacher to provide a guiding hand at the start of the journey, maximizing their learning experience. As such, it is not intended for those with intermediate or advanced skills to hone their craft – rather to assist beginners to learn the basics or to advance to some intermediate skills. First priority will be given to first-time students or early beginner level classes, and then to intermediate level courses.

1. Recipients must be veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces (Navy, Air Force, Army, Marines, Coast Guard, Space Force). Individuals must be able to provide proof of current service or honorable discharge with active duty ID or DD214.
2. Scholarship will reimburse 80% of a blacksmithing class/course(s) registration fee up to \$100 upon completion of the course, whichever is less. (for example, if the course(s) cost \$135, 80% of that is \$108, so the awardee would receive \$100; if the course(s) cost is \$95 then the awardee would receive \$76). Formula for determining award: Registration fee(s) \$ _____ X 0.80 = _____ TOTAL (awardee would receive \$100 or less of total course registration costs).
3. The coursework must be considered to be directly related to blacksmithing (not welding/fabrication). The FABA Scholarship Committee reserves the right to determine which coursework is appropriate during the review process.

Get full scholarship and application information at www.blacksmithing.org/scholarships

Support our FABA business members

DAMASCUS SPONSORS

David Sandlin - Traditions Workshop - Ft. Walton Beach, FL
Jake Pytlik - Warehouse Services Inc. - Naples, FL
Doug Hayes - Iron Osprey Forge - St. Augustine, FL
Benchmark Abrasives - Flagstaff, AZ

STEEL SPONSORS

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Jordan Borstelmann - Crooked Path Forge - Gainesville, FL
Rick Smith - Gainesville, FL
Nicole Horenstein - High Springs, FL
Mark Fillmore - Naples, FL
Cameron LaFrance - Micco, FL

Interested in being a FABA sponsor or expanding your sponsor listing?
Contact FABA President David Sandlin at President@blacksmithing.org
and include your business name, tag line, and contact information.

THE FLORIDA CLINKER BREAKER

Florida Artist Blacksmith Association

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March 2026

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FABA Membership Application: Membership begins when your application and \$30 membership fee is received. Membership is per family and lasts one year. Use your credit card to join or renew your FABA Membership via WIX by going to www.blacksmithing.org and clicking the **JOIN FABA** button to access the Square payment system.

OR send the below application and your check to "FABA" for \$30 to FABA's temporary Membership Secretary at:

FABA Membership Secretary,
C/O Sandlin
114 Choctaw Cove
Valparaiso, FL 32580

NAME _____

FAMILY MEMBERS _____

ADDRESS _____ CITY _____ ZIP _____

PHONE _____ CELL _____ EMAIL _____

DATE _____ NEW _____ RENEWAL _____ I want B&W Newsletter by mail (quarterly) _____ OR Color Newsletter by Email _____