

November 2025

CLINKER

Florida Artist Blacksmith Association



BREAKER

Established May 18, 1985



In Memoriam

With heavy hearts, we announce the passing of Juan Holbrooke. Juan was a friend, teacher, and ardent supporter of FABA. Learn more, page 8.



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.

Contributions to FABA are tax-deductible to the extent provided by law. FABA publishes the Florida Clinker Breaker monthly and FABA membership includes a subscription. We solicit correspondence and unpaid articles on any subjects related to FABA's purposes. Send to editor@blacksmithing.org. Materials submitted must be your own work, and citations of others must be clearly identified. By submitting materials, you are allowing FABA to edit, print and post them to FABA's website. ABANA Chapter newsletters may reprint non-copyrighted material, if it is credited to the author and this newsletter. You need the publisher's permission to reprint copyrighted material unless otherwise noted.

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FABA Conference Successes

A very successful conference, hated to leave, especially since I returned home to repair 1100 square feet of water damaged flooring in my house! Consequently my column might be a bit disjointed this time around.

We had over 200 people attend the conference. We sold all 150 banquet tickets! Well, actually we sold a few less than 150 but a generous, anonymous sponsor purchased all the remaining dinner tickets. Most outdoor classes were filled to capacity. Right before our forging competition on Friday night we had a great presentation by Jordan Borstelmann on his scholarship sword class. Cudos to the BBB for putting together an interesting competition, silent coaching by senior smiths to their apprentices using clay models—what a concept.



David Sandlin
FABA President

Granted there were some non-blacksmithing classes but the hot glass work classes and crossbow class were surprisingly popular. Maybe you, our membership, would like to see more of these type classes? Please let me know.

NNW blew everyone away with their regional competition piece – fantastic work! They have laid down the challenge for next year; motion and balance. Okay, you have your prompt, get to work!

Gift exchange will be something that spins and twirls. We had a lot of participants in the exchange this year and hope to see even more in 2026.

As always our volunteers really made the whole thing come together. I can't thank you enough.

Bottom line? We will fully fund our regions and our scholarships for 2026 ... and then some. But, more importantly we all received one of the best compliments I think we could ever hope for – our ABANA representative, Rusty Osborn, told me that of all the blacksmith events he has attended, we are the best he has seen for a 501(c)3 EDUCATIONAL nonprofit.

His observation is that we take our educational mission, "to teach, to preserve" very seriously; and make a fantastic effort to train more blacksmiths. Well done team!

— David Sandlin, President



Looking back at the 2025 Conference

Best thing someone said to me at the Conference: “I have never met so many friendly people! I will be back!”

Question turned back on me at the Conference: “What did *you* learn?” I had to think about that one. Not because I didn’t learn things, but because I was trying to differentiate between learning something new, and all the things the Conference reaffirmed. For example, it reaffirmed that we are a community, a family, a bunch of really hard-working, *Thoughtful* people who are happy to share our knowledge, our skills, our talents, and who are

not afraid to invite others in to come play. You can have no idea how very happy that makes me. It was not only why I joined back in the 80s, but why I have stayed, why I continue to serve on the Board, why I champion our organization at every chance I get. (Thanks to Jim Fisk, for asking me that question in the elevator; and for making me stop to think and to give thanks.)

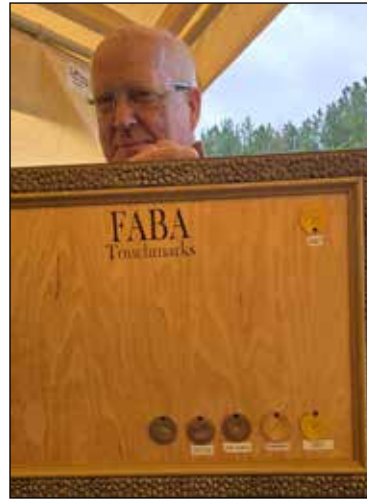


Was this your first conference? Your 40th? We would love to hear from you! What worked? What didn’t? Where can we improve? What are *YOU* looking for at one of the FABA Conferences? Shameless ask: where do you see yourself lending a specific hand next year? Are you interested in teaching, assisting with teaching a class or even learning to run the next conference, doing social media or print media, designing the next logo or T-shirts???

Please consider writing to the Board, texting or emailing us with your thoughts and suggestions. Stop in at your local/regional forge gatherings; reaffirm our “community” and learn something new!

On a personal note: Thank you. Thank you to the amazing Conference Team and Board Members. Huge thanks to our Volunteers – each and every one of you. Thanks for checking in on me during the weekend, for signing the cards of support for some of our folks (thanks to Mark Stone and Dolores Knerr for facilitating), for your incredible generosity in all aspects of the conference. And, for all the hugs!

— Lisa Anne Conner, Vice President



FABACON 2025



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FABACON 2025



Juan Holbrook, 1930-2025

Juan Holbrook, a longtime FABA supporter who lived and worked in Gainesville, passed away Oct. 13, 2025. He was 95.

His obituary was posted online by Williams-Thomas Funeral Homes:

Juan Edmundo Octavio Victor Alfaro Holbrook, was born in Talcahuano, Chile on September 22, 1930. Descended from a line of Welsh seafarers—his father a ship chandler's son, his mother a captain's daughter—his parents began as homesteaders before his father, Gustavo, eventually found success as a banker. Juan was their second child. In his early years he survived diphtheria, tuberculosis, and small pox. Though at first he struggled academically, his mind ignited while studying in trade school, opening to a great love for the sciences. He received a scholarship to study physics at University College, London. In England he met Giovanna Ravetti from Italy, whom he married in London in 1959.

Shortly after their son David was born in 1960, Juan and Giovanna set off on a 66-day navigation from Liverpool to Viña del Mar, Chile. After teaching at the Polytechnic Institute in Santiago for a few years, Juan received two National Science Foundation scholarships to pursue graduate study in the US. After moving to America with his family, he earned a Master's degree in Physics at Cornell University, where their daughter Cornelia was born in 1964, and a PhD in Material Science from the University of Florida in 1972. Feeling welcomed into the Gainesville community, and due to political unrest in Chile, Juan and his family applied to become naturalized citizens. Their daughter, Andrea, was born in Gainesville in 1969.

While a professor at Santa Fe College, Juan helped his wife Giovanna with starting Holbrook Travel, a pioneering ecotourism company. He later left his teaching position to work with her at Holbrook, where he oversaw the computerization, accounting, and played a major supporting role in the company. His love of trekking and climbing, which started during his youth in the Andes, led him to guide many treks for Holbrook groups, including the famous Inca Trail from Cusco to Machu Picchu. Juan directed the initiative to become the first underwriter of WRUF FM 89.1, the NPR affiliate for the University of Florida. His love of classical music led him to found Pro-Arte Musica with Bernice Maskin, a program which encouraged and



funded classical musicians to perform for Gainesville audiences. He also assisted Giovanna in establishing Selva Verde Lodge & Private Reserve, which still today protects over 500 acres of rainforest in Costa Rica.

During the early 1980's Juan and Giovanna undertook the restoration of the historic McKenzie House, an iconic Victorian home built in 1895 that is now part of the Sweetwater Branch Inn Bed & Breakfast owned and operated by daughter, Cornelia. Juan and his family also restored the Bodiford and Hendrix houses, both historic homes in downtown Gainesville.

Following his retirement, he created a blacksmithing workshop at his home in Gainesville and delighted in making beautiful and functional pieces such as tables, candelabras, and more. He especially enjoyed teaching and sharing his craft. Beloved by his children, he was an intelligent, curious, kind father and man, with a lively sense of humor.

Juan is survived by his three children, David Holbrook, Cornelia Holbrook, and Andrea Holbrook-Wagman, and five grandchildren: Julia Holbrook Rasmussen, Agatha Wagman, Juan Carson Holbrook, Duane Luca Holbrook, and Grant Fitzgerald. He was preceded in death by his sister, Eva Alfaro, and brother, Marcelo Alfaro.

A Celebration of Juan's Life will be held Sunday, Nov. 2, 2-5 p.m. at Sweetwater Branch Inn: <https://bit.ly/JuanAlfaroHolbrookCelebrationofLife>.

Greater Orlando Schedule Change

The Greater Orlando Chapter will be moving the monthly meeting to the SECOND Saturday of the month to help with scheduling during the holiday season. Our next meeting will be December 13th and will continue on the second Saturday of each month.

Meeting date: December 13th, 9AM

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 Regional Coordinator**

SE Region Meeting Schedule

The SE Region meets every third Saturday of the month at The Farm, 1566 S. Military Trail, West Palm Beach, FL. Just turn off Military at the pole painted red, white and blue, and follow your GPS or Google maps.

Get more info on the FABA SE Facebook page: www.facebook.com/groups/603288803747002

SW Region Meeting Schedule

Please check our FABA SW Facebook page for more info at www.facebook.com/groups/228279738123674, or contact antony.fenn@gmail.com. Thank you!

— **Tony Fenn, SW Region Coordinator**

Far West Meeting, Nov. 8

FABA Far West is still unpacking the trailer from FABACON. We had a great time at the conference, but that pretty much made up all of our October activities.

Our next event is our annual forging competition at Timber Creek distillery on Nov. 8. We will meet at the distillery to set up at 9 AM, and the hammer falls at 10 AM. This year's challenge, as laid down by Cam and Aaron, is to make a pizza cutter. Design and style is your choice, but the judges are known for picking items with a cool factor over anything else. As long as it functions, then how it looks becomes really important. Competition ends at 3 PM and we'll spend the next hour putting gear back in the trailer. The judges final decision will occur at 4 PM.

We will not be holding a meeting over the Christmas holiday, but will return to meet at Traditions Workshop the fourth Saturday of January and the fourth Saturday of February. Both meetings will start at 9 AM. We will be focusing on FABA Journeyman standards for those two meetings. For any meeting where we do not have a specific project or objective expect us to cover the FABA journeyman standards or parts of the ABANA National Curriculum as the year progresses.

— **David Sandlin, FABA President**

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
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Scott Brown - Medieval Smith - Land O' Lakes, FL
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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.

NW Region Meeting, Nov. 8

The Northwest region will be holding our November meeting at Aunt Louise's Farm. The 8th of November is the second Saturday, and our meeting will start at 9 am.

Aunt Louise's Farm doesn't open until 10 am, so that gives us some time before the crowd gets there. Our equipment is already onsite, and has been since the first weekend in October. This is their fall season and we are invited to go and Blacksmith anytime they are open.

They're open from 10 am to 6 pm on Saturdays and 2 pm to 6 pm on Sundays. For the demonstration, I'm looking for volunteers to share with us something they brought home from the conference.

Last year I bought home a pair of tongs made from horseshoes, and we made several throughout the past year, and it inspired me to try a few pairs of pliers too!

As usual we will be set up for open forges type participation as well. For the meal, we're going to buy pork sandwiches and corn on the cob from Aunt Louise's, and we should bring sides and desserts to go along with.

The cooler weather is lovely for Blacksmithing and I hope to see you there!

— **John Pfund, NW Region Coordinator**

NW Region Open Forges

Mike Bettinger is hosting open forges at his welding shop on Monday and Friday mornings. Sometimes they don't, though, because of doctor appointments and such, so people wanting to participate should contact Mike at 850-508-3592 to get on the notification list.

Jim Labolito hosts open forges on Mondays from 7pm to 9pm. Jim says anyone is welcome and everything is provided. His phone number is 850-567-6464.

Roger Bell (850-566-4629) is still hosting open forges at his house on Tuesday mornings. We usually get there between 8 and 9 a.m. and stay until noon or so. Sometimes we have lunch at Roger's.

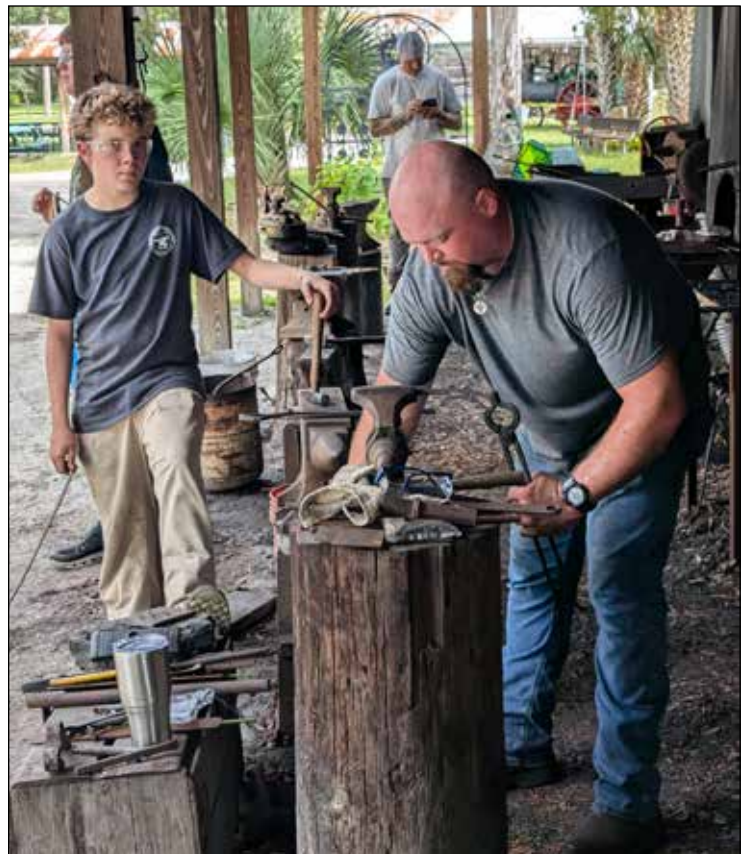
The fourth and final place we have open forges is on Wednesday evenings with Jeff Mohr in Crawfordville. Jeff has been hosting open forges since before he moved to Florida.

We're back to teaching classes at the Panhandle Pioneer Settlement on first and third Saturdays of every month until the weather gets too hot again in May. These classes at Panhandle Pioneer Settlement are a good opportunity for club members to participate on many levels.

Central NE Region Report

We had a great meeting in October putting the finishing touches on our group project before conference. There will not be a November meeting as Barberville Pioneer Settlement will be having their Fall Jamboree. Please check the FABA NE Facebook page for more info at facebook.com/groups/381431599058683/, or contact William Thornton at knifegsx@yahoo.com. Thank you!

— **William Thornton,
Central NE Coordinator**



North NE Meeting Report

NNE Region. WELL DONE ALL!! A big thanks to all the folks who contributed ideas, labor and artistic creations toward our group project. Our Floating City won the President's Challenge competition at FABACON 2025! And for those of you who did the punching and drifting and other traditional and modern work on the supporting infrastructure that isn't immediately visible in the final assembly - remember, without all that work nothing would have been able to 'float' as it were. Your contributions added to our score as much as the showier items on the 'streets', so thanks again. And your work got LOTS of great comments from all the folks attending FABACON.

Thanks, and kudos also to Ben Thompson for his input, visionary prompts and ongoing work with the base, the maquette (the small model for those who don't want to grab a dictionary), and numerous stylistic and artistic touches. Another shout out to William Thornton who managed to help with both the NNE and the Central NE regional meetings (and who is now the CNE Regional Coordinator as well). He put hours of work into both projects and is (and will remain) a great asset to our region and to FABA. And new FABA member Emanuel Shockley who took off from his forge at the St. Aug Fountain of Youth to work our NNE Saturdays, Sunday work days and really jumped in.

We were also well represented with several NNE folks teaching and volunteering throughout the weekend.

North NE Meeting Schedule

The NNE region will be meeting on Nov 8th and Dec 8th at Iron Osprey Forge, 102 Marshall Circle, St. Augustine, 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.

The November meeting we will be making bells. Lots of bells. We will explore different styles and designs of bells, so come ready to shape and then ring some metal (hmmm, could be potential holiday gifts..??). We will also talk about what skills or demos you all want to see in 2026 (casting, repousse, power hammer skills, or....????) and maybe choose some field trip options at other shops around the area.

In December we will have ornament making stations set up (a great time to bring a family member or 3 to visit for some light hammering, hint, hint) as well as some other activities and some home baking treats.

The January meeting is tentatively set for the 10th.

For those folks farther afield that NNE Florida, you all know you are invited at any time, right? We've had folks from Georgia (even north GA), West Virginia, Virginia and across FL, so maybe plan a visit to St. Augustine for the family and drop on by as part of your weekend.

Please check our FABA NE Facebook page for more info at facebook.com/groups/381431599058683/, or contact djhayes29@hotmail.com. Thank you!

— Doug Hayes, NNE Region Coordinator

Power and Treadle Hammers For Sale

\$3000 for both. For more information, please contact Mr. Harris, 352-718-3438.



November-December 2025

Bituminous Bits

Decorative Ring with John and Nancy Perilloux

This decorative ring project was one of three demo projects that John and Nancy Perilloux put in the auction at the Tannehill conference. John forged the ring and leaves and Nancy added the flowers and made the bronze rivets. Forging the ring and making the rivets were particularly interesting techniques.

After forging tapers on both ends of the bar, John forged the ring - without bending as such - with a set of dies crowned in both directions. The effect was to fuller one edge of the bar more than the other. As the fuller stretched one edge more than the other the bar bent into a ring. This is the same effect that knife makers fight when forging bevels, but this time John turned it to his advantage. He did use a circle jig and a sort of stake to refine and finish the shape of the ring.

Nancy made the heads of the bronze rivets by heating just the end of a bronze brazing rod with a torch until the end started to melt and formed a ball. She held the brazing rod over a hard firebrick while heating and then drove the rod down onto the brick just as the molten ball formed. With the head started in this way, she held the rod in a bolster to hammer out the rivet head. The hole in the bolster was sized to a close fit to the diameter of the brazing rod.

As a finish on the ring, Nancy recommended applying gun blue and then bringing out highlights with a maroon Scotchbrite pad. Nancy said she used JAX Iron, Steel, and Nickel Blackener from JaxChemical.com.



Finished ring with leaves and flowers and a ring before adding the flowers.



Taper the ends of the bar for the ring.



Using fullering dies curved in both directions to fuller one edge of the bar more than the other, causing the bar to bend into a ring.

Bituminous Bits

November-December 2025



Stake tool for refining the radius of the ring.



Checking the shape of the ring on a round form.



Driving the near-molten end of the bronze rod onto firebrick to start a rivet head.



Forging the head of a bronze rivet in a bolster.



Two bronze rivets with finished, decorated heads.



Texturing rivet heads with a punch after setting.

Reprinted from the Bituminous Bits, The Journal of the Alabama Forge Council, November-December 2025

Jerry Grice Scholarship deadline: Dec. 31

This scholarship was established to honor the memory of Jerry Grice, one of our charter members. Its purpose is to further the craft of blacksmithing, and any FABA member who has been in good standing for at least one year qualifies to apply. The \$1,000 award may be divided evenly amongst multiple winners. If a single winner, the award is limited to the actual cost or \$1,000, whichever is lesser. It may be used for materials, tuition, lodging and transportation (paid at the rate of 43.2 cents per mile or the actual cost of public transportation, whichever is lesser).

A letter of application or a detailed email may be submitted provided the applicant answers the following questions:

1. What is your name, address and phone number?
2. How much experience in blacksmithing do you have?
3. How will this instruction help you with your blacksmithing craft?
4. What is the name of the school you wish to attend?
5. What is the name of the course and the name of the instructor teaching the class?

6. What costs will be incurred (tuition, lodging, transportation, etc.)?

Note: By accepting the Jerry Grice Scholarship, the applicant agrees to provide a demonstration of learned skills during a regular FABA meeting, and to write an article concerning the learning experience, including a “how-to” portion, for publication in the Clinker Breaker within 6 months of completing the class.

The next item is not required but strongly suggested: An item should be made with the new knowledge and offered for auction at the Annual Conference.

Completed letters of application or emails should be sent to John Butler, Chair, FABA Scholarship Committee, 777 Tyre Road, Havana, FL 32333 or jgbutler@sprintmail.com.

Deadline for receipt is Dec. 31, 2025. Three finalists will be recommended to the Board. The decision of the Board shall be final, and the successful applicant(s) will be notified after the vote. The scholarship amount of \$1000 may be split evenly amongst multiple candidates if deemed so by the FABA Board of Directors.

FABA Veterans Scholarship Fund Application

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).
 - a. 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 \$150 upon completion of the course, whichever is less. 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.
3. Awardees will be notified via email and USPS the status of their application approximately two weeks after the committee meets.

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

THE FLORIDA CLINKER BREAKER

Florida Artist Blacksmith Association

David Sandlin, President
114 Choctaw Cove
Valparaiso, FL 32580



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November 2025

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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 _____

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