

Pioneer Hall of Fame: Pokey LaFarge, class of 2001



The University High School Alumni Association honors Pokey LaFarge, class of 2001, as a 2014 Hall of Fame Alumni Award recipient for his contributions to his profession and civic service.

As a young boy, LaFarge was impacted profoundly by both of his grandfathers, each of whom influenced him with their own passion. One was a musician in St. Louis and gave LaFarge his first guitar. The other was an amateur historian and taught LaFarge about important historical events, such as the Civil War and World War II. With a passion for history and literature, LaFarge effectively combined his grandfathers' passions with blues music.

After graduating from U-High in 2001, LaFarge hitchhiked throughout the United States and earned a living playing for the public on sidewalks and streets. In 2007, LaFarge released *Marmalade*, his first album. Shortly after that, LaFarge released *Beat, Move and Shake* (2008) and *Riverboat Soul* (2010). He was well on his way to becoming a well-known figure on the music scene. He has since traveled to all lower 48 states, 15 countries, and 7 Canadian provinces.

He has played in some of music's most famous halls, including The Ryman Auditorium in Nashville, Tennessee, Red Rocks Amphitheatre in Morrison, Colorado, and has played twice at Radio City Music Hall in New York City, New York. During this time he also assembled his band, named Pokey LaFarge.

In 2010, Pokey LaFarge was named Best New Band at the Newport Folk Festival in Newport, Rhode Island. The Riverfront Times in St. Louis named Pokey LaFarge the Best Americana Band in 2010 and 2011. Additionally, Pokey LaFarge won Best Americana Album with *Riverboat Soul* at the Independent Music Awards in 2010. In 2011, the band won Independent Music Awards for Best Americana Album with *Middle of Everywhere* and Best Americana Song with *Ain't the Same*.

The band has toured with Jack White and Old Crow Medicine Show and has also made their rounds on late night television, appearing on Conan O'Brien and the Late Show with David Letterman. In 2013, LaFarge and the group made an appearance on the APM "live" radio broadcast of *A Prairie Home Companion*, with Garrison Keillor. They performed four selections, including *Central Time*, *What The Rain Will Bring*, *Garbage Man Blues*, and *Close the Door*. LaFarge has been featured in Bloomington, Illinois' local newspaper, The Pantagraph, as well as radio stations WGLT and WBNQ.

LaFarge is a preservationist and proponent of traditional American music and values. He credits his family, University High School, and growing up with Midwestern values with

making him what he is today - a successful, internationally renowned musician, performer, songwriter, producer and entertainer.

LaFarge has also given back to the community, donating his talents to The Strings Attached project in St. Louis, Missouri. This program provides guitar lessons and music education as well as musical mentoring opportunities for youth.

Pokey LaFarge is on a mission, encouraging fans worldwide to think differently about what it means to celebrate musical traditions. Simply put, Pokey explains, "It's not retro music. It's American music that never died."