

WILSONVILLE SPOKESMAN

JOHNNY ROCKS!

Lightning storm cuts concert short, but audience responds in droves
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IN ENTERTAINMENT/20

THE ULTIMATE FUN RUN

Wilsonville Kiwanis preps for its award-winning youth event, this year at WHS' Randall Stadium

ROCK AND ROLL FOREVER

■ The West Linn-based Youth Music Project is bringing a unique style of pop, rock and country music education to kids in the metro area

By JOSH KULLA

WILSONVILLE SPOKESMAN

It's a music school unlike anything that's come before it in the metro area. Part music school, part cultural training ground, the Youth Music Project is a brand new non-profit organization dedicated to teaching kids of all ages about rock 'n roll and other popular music styles.

Instead of Mozart or Brahms, the classics this school bases its curriculum on bear names like the Beastie Boys or the White Stripes.

Established late last year by the Marie Lamfrom Charitable Foundation, the Project now is in the midst of its first summer of spreading the rock 'n roll gospel to a new generation of devotees.

The Foundation's board of trustees is made up largely of people with children who have or are attending West Linn-Wilsonville schools, which are known for vibrant arts and music curriculum. That underlying foundation now is providing a wellspring of youth with an interest in much more musically than the traditional jazz or symphonic band or choir.

"They have been talking for a couple of years about wanting to do something like this," said Project executive director Charles Lewis. "The trustees had their kids go through West Linn-Wilsonville schools and they realized that students here are really fortunate to have music and arts in the schools, so they wanted to complement that with some other things that weren't offered, like rock and pop and country, and give kids an opportunity to try out different types of music."

The Youth Music Project already enjoys substantial financial backing — Lewis demurs when asked about amounts — and was able to hit the ground running starting with his hire in January.

The new school now is in the midst of closing on the purchase of a former church in West Linn that will one day serve as its headquarters. And it already has on hand a mobile classroom and enough instruments, including complete drum kits, to equip a half-dozen or more full rock bands.



JOSH KULLA / WILSONVILLE SPOKESMAN

Youth Music Project students perform as a full rock band at a recent camp-ending concert at Wilsonville High School.

It's been a lot of work over the past six months just to get to this point, Lewis said.

"Even the summer camps, in retrospect," have been ambitious," he said. "There's a lot to it, the infrastructure has to be in place, you have to recruit students, get instructors. But people are doing it for the right reasons."

Wilsonville High School hosted the city's first rock n roll camp from July 9-13, with instructors taking the week to teach budding musicians about rock guitar, bass, drums, screen printing and much more.

Project instructors boast a wealth of experience in the music world, both performing and teaching. They understand that the goal of the organization stretches well beyond music itself.

"I really enjoy getting kids to understand the greater concepts of what it means to play music and be in a band and work together as a team or a group toward a common goal that the group decides," said Project instructor Shana Doolittle, who helped found Portland's popular

Rock Camp for Girls a decade ago. "I enjoy watching kids communicate and come to realizations together; they'll discover something where all their eyes light up with understanding and that doesn't always happen."

That's exactly what happened for Jocelyn and Audrey LeFave, each of whom attended the camp in Wilsonville. Although slightly intimidated at first by the unknown, said the girls' mother, Monica LeFave, that feeling quickly wore off as the music took over.

"Oh, we're non-traditional," LeFave said when asked about the attraction of rock 'n roll. "It was a lot of fun and it got them interested in music on their terms. My older daughter was kind of hesitant about going to camp with strangers, but as the week went on she got more excited and we're going to look into the individual lessons during the school year."

That's exactly the result instructors are looking for, even if it doesn't always occur.

"A friend of mine who's a music teacher told me the other

AT A GLANCE

Youth Music Project

■ The following camps will be offered the week of Aug. 6-10 at Wilsonville High School, 6800 SW Wilsonville Road: Rock Band Camp; Guitar Camp; Drum Camp; Piano Camp.

Open to the public; registration for most camps is \$350, but scholarships are available for children eligible for free and reduced-price school lunches.

Web: www.youthmusicproject.org

day, and it's correct, that at this age you're not so much teaching music, you're teaching focus," said Hobbs Mageret, a guitar instructor from Sisters who has taught with the Americana Song Academy for Youth. "You're keeping the kids engaged."

That's exactly how it worked for Wilsonville student Andrew Fisher, a seventh grader who has two years' experience playing piano.

"At first I didn't want to go, but the first day I went home,

"I'm like 'Mom, I think I want to continue this camp,'" Fisher said. "I asked if there were fall classes after school, and they said 'Yes' and I was really excited about that."

The highlight of the week was a Friday afternoon concert in which students, including Fisher, got the chance to show off his or her skills in front of a live audience at the high school.

The concerts are an "interesting time," Mageret said.

"When it comes time for the performance it's time to step back from the experience," he said. "And you're able to realize how far they have come when you're not trying to push them anymore."

Both Doolittle and Mageret agree that one of the unique aspects of the Project, generally, is the emphasis placed on rock music as a lifestyle and occupation rather than simply a music genre.

"One of the biggest things kids get is being in the culture," Mageret said. "It's being around musicians, seeing how they act

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Rock

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and how they hold themselves and how musicians communicate and cooperate with each other. The subtle things will be the most important influences for the kids.”

Lewis helped found Portland's Ethos Music School 13 years ago, and helped develop it into a juggernaut with 88 employees and a \$1.5 million annual budget. He therefore views the aims of the Youth Music Project



CHARLES LEWIS

the Project stand out from other metro area music schools. “The affordability is huge and the accessibility; with foundation sup-

port, we were able to offer 100 percent free scholarships for kids if they're on free lunch and 50 percent off if they're on reduced lunch. They just wanted to make sure everyone could participate.”

“I think it's the focus and the different types of music styles,”

Lewis said when asked what makes the community here in general is more affluent than in Portland, the average family income is much higher,” he said. “But the kids who are not in those high income families are completely left out. They

don't have any of those opportunities, and as far as I know we're the only non-profit music school in the area. To make this accessible to every

kid in the area is an amazing thing the foundation is doing and I think it's going to be very well received by the community.” ■

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