

CLIFTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Danny A. Robertozzi, Ed.D.

Superintendent of Schools

Lucy Danny

President

Clifton Board of Education



Samantha DeRose

Communication Technology Specialist

Clifton Public Schools

sderose@cliftonschools.net

NEWS RELEASE

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Music Angels program offers every Clifton student the opportunity to be a musician.

With one month of summer vacation left, the Clifton Public Schools Visual and Performing Arts Department is busy preparing Music Angels instruments for students this fall.

Music Angels are businesses or individuals who sponsor instrumental music education for all through monetary or instrumental donations to students in need attending Clifton Public Schools. The program was initiated fifteen years ago by former Visual and Performing Arts Supervisor, Maryann Baskinger. Baskinger contacted Clifton alumni to donate their old instruments to students enrolled in Clifton Public Schools. Mrs. Baskinger's successors, Peggy Cioce and Jason Leshowitz, expanded the program by reaching out to businesses for monetary, tax-deductible donations.

The Music Angels program that began with roughly twenty to thirty instruments now supplies over 600 instruments to qualifying students according to Jason Leshowitz, Supervisor of Visual and Performing Arts.

"It gives students who wouldn't ordinarily have the opportunity to afford a high-quality instrument the ability to develop a life-long love of music," remarked Leshowitz.

Students in grades four through eight who qualify for free or reduced lunches fill out an application along with a \$25.00 fee used to purchase future instruments. Applications are accepted each school year between April and June. Students must re-apply before the end of each school year for the upcoming year.

The inventory for string instruments is kept at School 17 and managed by Clifton strings teacher, Shang Lee. Band instrument inventory is kept at School 6, the district administration building, and maintained by Jason Leshowitz.

Instruments are picked up starting in September for the school year and returned to Clifton music teachers in June. Students enrolled in the Integrated Summer Enrichment Experience, I.S.E.E., program are permitted to keep their instruments for the duration of the program.

Currently, between 100-200 students at each middle school, Christopher Columbus and Woodrow Wilson, and over 400 students throughout Clifton's elementary schools benefit from Music Angels for strings or band.

"The Music Angels program is another example of the extraordinary work that Clifton Public Schools does to ensure that all students have the opportunity to shine," said Clifton Superintendent, Dr. Danny A. Robertozzi. "This is a community at its best, coming together for children. And what better way than to give the gift of music education."

Shang Lee, who has been teaching in Clifton for fifteen years, said, "We only had about ten string instruments when I first started. We now have 140 instruments, and that's just in the elementary schools. That's 140 more musicians that we would not have had without Music Angels."

Leshowitz continued, "There have been times where parents have had tears in their eyes, stating how grateful their family has been for this opportunity. Students' eyes just light up when they see their instruments for the first time."

Several individuals and businesses send annual donations to Music Angels. The winter and spring concert programs include a list of all donors. "We appreciate donations of any size. Generally, our Music Angel recipients seem to take practice and music very seriously. I truly believe that they appreciate the extraordinary opportunity to be a part of the music world."

Anyone interested in donating an instrument or money to the music angels program can contact Mr. Leshowitz directly at jleshowitz@cliftonschoools.net or 973 594 4199 for further information.

Photo Captions

music_angels1: A Music Angels viola next in line for repair work.

music_angels2: Shang Lee preparing string instruments for the upcoming school year.

Music_angels3: Music Angels band instruments stored and repaired at the district administration building.

music_angels4: A Music Angels saxophone about to be polished and inspected for the next musician.