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YOUTH IN ACTION



DISCOVERING TALENT

BY ERIN HELDSTAB

What do pepperoni pizza and “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star” have in common? For Anthony Moore, a third-grader from Benton Harbor, Michigan, it’s all about rhythm. Anthony is just one of the 15 children taking free music lessons from Andrews University students as part of the Benton Harbor String Outreach Program.

The program developed when Carla Trynchuk, associate professor of music and accomplished violinist at Andrews University, felt a burden to use her talents to reach out to the community. She began attracting media attention, requesting instruments and financial donations. Carla then enlisted the help of several music majors in her department to teach the lessons.

Once there were enough instruments and money in place to begin the program, Carla and her instructors went to four Benton Harbor schools to find eager and interested kids. At the schools, Andrews music majors performed demonstration recitals, resulting in over 50 parents and their children interviewing to see who might be the best fit for the program. When it came to choosing, Carla said, “We were looking for students who were interested and enthusiastic about learning a new instrument, and who also had a commitment to stick with it.” In the end, 15 children

were chosen to begin free violin, viola, or cello lessons.

Each Sabbath afternoon, students meet with their Andrews University teachers at the Benton Harbor Salvation Army. “We are so fortunate to have this location for lessons,” Carla said. When most people think of a Salvation Army, they think of used clothes or a red kettle around Christmas time. However, the Salvation Army is currently in its seventh year of providing extensive arts and education programming for Benton Harbor. When Susan Dietrich Reed, arts and education director, found out about the need, she said, “We have the facility, and there is space.” Thanks to this generosity, students can now have their one-on-one lessons in private music rooms.

Ginnie Roa, Isaac Sinnett, Aaron Sinnett, Cecilia Coe, and Abigail Doukhan, string instructors, have all noticed improvements, no

matter how small, in each of their students. “We try to make music not just a lesson but a part of life,” Isaac said. While in lessons, these teachers build relationships with their students by asking questions about school, home, and, of course, how much they practiced that week. These lessons are providing a different outlet for students to express themselves, making other areas of their lives stronger.

After tuning, students are taught proper hand positions for their instruments as well as different rhythms to use when playing. These rhythms are put to words or songs, such as “pepperoni pizza” and “Mississippi stop, stop.” Ginnie Roa said, “When they learn a song or rhythm and are happy with what they’ve learned, that’s success.”

In December 2003, students had the opportunity to show off their progress at their first recital. “It was so fun to see the new students with new instruments in their lives,” Carla said. “I was impressed with how the students performed and the creativity of the teachers.” There was a great sense of achievement for all the parents, students, and teachers. It’s amazing what a little “pepperoni pizza” and “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star” can do for a child and a community.



Isaac Sinnett enjoys instructing Anthony Moore on the cello each week.

Erin Heldstab is an Andrews University student news writer.