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Portland Tribune

TUESDAY, JANUARY 15, 2002

PUBLISHED EACH TUESDAY & FRIDAY

FREE



Loren Frank, 8, studies her violin teacher, Jonas Tauber. Right: Six-year-old Maya Griffith tries her first notes on the piano.

TRIBUNE PHOTO: JIM CLARK

Tuned for LIFE

Ethos gives the gift of music

By **STEPHEN BLAIR**
The Tribune

Housed in two locations on North and Northeast Killingsworth streets, the non-profit music center Ethos Inc. takes its name from the Greek word meaning "the distinguishing characteristic of a person, group or institution."

Since 1999, its staff members and volunteers have distinguished themselves by offering inexpensive music lessons to children who may not otherwise be able to afford them.

Other services include music assemblies in schools and a mobile program that brings music presentations to Portland parks, school grounds and rural communities.

Most of the music classes take place at the center's buildings, in rooms that are decorated with a mismatched assortment of well-worn furniture.

Using donated and grant-funded equipment, the children play drums, trumpets, violins and other instruments.

They take their lessons in rooms with names such as "Chopin's Showroom" and "Joplin's Joint."

Eight-year-old Austin Hathorn takes weekly drum lessons from

Adam Reid, the director of events for Ethos. Seated at a drum set with drumsticks in hand, he says, "I like the beats and sounds."

At home, Hathorn hones his skills on tabletops, counters and other surfaces.

"I need a drum set," he tells Reid. "When are we going to make drum pads?"

"Soon," Reid answers, satisfying his pupil for the time being.

Hathorn's mother, Michelle, sits in on the lesson. She enrolled her son in lessons at Ethos because of his obvious love for music. "He's always been interested in

music. Drumming is a really good outlet for him."

Man behind the music

Ethos is the brainchild of Charles Lewis, a well-spoken 30-year-old with a keen sense of civic duty. His office is a veritable shrine to Robert F. Kennedy, whom Lewis calls a common-man hero dedicated to hard work and public service.

Lewis graduated from the University of Portland in 1994. After a four-year stint in Africa with the Peace Corps, he earned a master's degree in public policy at Harvard University. To research his thesis, he developed educational outreach programs for



"All we need is music, sweet music
There'll be music everywhere ..."
— "Dancing in the Street"

Ethos: Guitar and piano are the most popular



For anyone else, his keyboard is silent, but Alex Garner, 7, can hear how he's doing through headphones.

From page 1

Club Passim, a folk-music venue in Cambridge, Mass.

Upon returning to Portland, Lewis used the experience as a blueprint for Ethos. The governing philosophy behind the center

is that every child should have a chance to study music, regardless of his or her economic background.

"The main idea is to get music to every kid who wants it," he says. "We're trying to fill a void in the school system. Most Portland elementary schools don't have music education, but high schools do."

Music education, Lewis argues, should not be viewed as a luxury, but as a vital part of a child's intellectual development. To support his point, he mentions a 1995 study by the College Board that proved that students with music experience scored 103 points higher on their SATs than students without a musical background.

Since opening its doors two years ago, Ethos has reached approximately 5,000 children through its group and private



lessons and with outreach efforts such as music assemblies in local schools.

Funding for the programs comes from three sources.

"Foundation grants and dona-

tions from the community are vital to expanding our programs," Lewis says.

Since students pay for services on a sliding scale, some funding comes from clients who can afford the higher fees. Finally, Ethos raises money by holding benefit concerts at the Aladdin Theater and other venues.

Jam sessions

What instruments do most children gravitate toward? Michelle Boss, the director of programming, says guitar and piano are most popular. A pianist herself, she thinks the 88 keys are ideal building blocks for a child's music education.

"The piano is well-rounded, and you can see the visual relationship between notes," she says. "It's the best instrument to start kids on."

Kinder Keys, a Monday afternoon class taught by part-time instructor Maureen Pandos, is a



TRIBUNE PHOTOS: JIM CLARK

Wesley Black, 7, gets encouragement from his instructor, Ashlee Welton, as he attempts a scale on his trumpet. Above: Violin teacher Jonas Tauber demonstrates the desired length of a note for student Philip Mackley, 9.

training ground for aspiring pianists ages 4 to 7. Pandos circulates among the class members, who work on tunes like "Old MacDonald" on high-quality keyboards equipped with headphones.

"Excellent counting," she says to a quick study named Taya Mick. "That's just how I wanted to hear it."

Asked about her future in music, the budding pianist says she hopes to continue to study pi-

ano, an instrument she calls "easier than the others."

But she knows even an "easy" instrument requires dedication.

"I like to practice every day at home," she says.

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