

Philomath performing arts seeks donations to establish endowment fund

BRAD FUQUA Philomath Express Oct 25, 2017



The Philomath Middle School band performs this past December during the annual winter concert. Some of the instruments used by those students have been around since the school opened in 1973.

ANIBALORTIZ, MID-VALLEY MEDIA

Philomath Middle School band director Diane Crocker can share stories about how music and theater has changed the lives of students. Pausing for only a few seconds, she thinks back to a very smart but shy teen who was once talked into trying out for the play, "Fiddler on the Roof."

The student only wanted a small part but after witnessing his talent, Crocker made the call to ask if he'd consider a larger role. Once it was confirmed that a script would be available to him, they struck a deal.

"It opened up his whole life and people looked at him different," Crocker said. "They realized some of the depth that he had and he gained confidence and became a leader. It was an amazing transformation of his self."

There are many more of those stories out there in Philomath. High school band director Dan Johnson and countless volunteers and parents can also relay those types of successes. Performing arts simply makes a difference and it's why a board has been established with the mission of providing an additional stream of funding for ongoing program needs.

"Performing arts — they decrease truancy rates and they increase graduation rates," parent Karyn Stanley said. "These are the things that make kids feel they are part of a community, that school is important. It attacks a different part of their brains ... it assists in those other academic disciplines."

Kay McGee, who with her husband, John, runs JD McGee, a Philomath-based civil engineering and surveying firm, approached the school's performing arts directors in May with the idea of establishing an endowment fund.

"She had children that went through the performing arts program and they've since graduated and gone on, but she's had it in her heart to find a way to support our program," Crocker said.

It wasn't long after that a meeting was arranged to talk about needs and then a board was organized. The Philomath Performing Arts Benefit Fund Board includes Johnson and Crocker (band directors), Mark and Katie Rasmussen and Stanley (parents of performing arts students), and Kay McGee, and Tom and Kiki Klipfel (community at-large positions).

Officers include McGee as president/chair, Johnson as secretary and Tom Klipfel as treasurer.

In August, the board entered into a formal agreement with the Philomath Community Foundation to manage the financial assets of the endowed fund. The foundation holds nonprofit status and will take in donations.

The Philomath Community Foundation requires seed funding of \$20,000 before funds can be invested as endowed and annual grant distributions be dispersed.

"We need to have at least \$20,000 vested by the end of the year, then it goes into a pot of money and it needs to stay there for a year," Crocker said. "It builds interest and then a year from then, we can start spending interest. We can continue to build the pot, but we have to have at least \$20,000 to be vested to begin that process."

To make the possibilities even more exciting for the board has been an offer by an anonymous donor to match any donations one to one up to \$20,000. As a result, the board hopes to raise \$20,000, get an additional \$20,000 and have \$40,000 to get it all up and running.

"The idea is the endowment rather than just fundraising for immediate needs and saying, 'we'll, we've got this \$20,000, now we can fix everything we have, we're done' when in another 10, 15, 20 years, we're right back in the exact same spot," Stanley said.

"So the idea with the endowment is to create an ongoing revenue stream for these programs that as we continue to build principle in the endowment fund, the amount we can grant on an annual basis increases and we can eventually replace these instruments, keep up with what happens in the future and take the programs from now into the future."

Stanley stressed that the program does not replace existing funding from the school district.

"That's been a blessing and they're grateful for what the district is able to provide, but these programs are every intensive," she said. "They have intensive infrastructure needs and this will just be a supplemental stream of funding."

According to the Philomath School District's business office, performing arts funding has decreased locally 34 percent over the past decade.

"We are using instruments that are 40 years old," Crocker said. "The middle school was built in the '70s and there were many instruments purchased at that time that I'm still using every day. And they're beat up pretty bad."

Johnson said a needs assessment was completed this past summer with the high school needing \$10,800 and the middle school \$10,645 just for instrument repair.

"That's just to get us to zero, to get everything playable, it's \$21,000," Johnson said.

"Then you have instruments that you don't have, never have had or instruments that need to be replaced that are simply not even fixable," Stanley added.

"I've never seen a school bassoon, for example," Crocker said. "I just got a donation of a school oboe recently, but that was my first one. There are kids who would like to learn these instruments and we don't have instruments for them. And those are really difficult to rent because they're so expensive and many places won't rent them."

Performing arts, which includes music and theater, serves 75 percent of the K-12 student population. That's includes 773 students in the elementary and primary school, 218 at the middle school and 192 at the high school.

"I've got instruments that are not working that cannot be used right now because that's \$10,000 in repairs we need to do," Crocker said. "I've got some that are working but not as well as they should and it's so frustrating to play an instrument that's not working well. We want these kids to have good experiences."

A few examples of instrument replacement costs include \$10,650 for two baritone saxophones, \$6,628 for two tubas and \$5,350 for two tenor saxophones. As for repair costs, it runs \$1,630 to fix a trumpet — and that's just one sampling.

The board hopes to be able to take advantage of the matching fund offer through checks coming in from individuals and families. In the future, other sources will be tapped to try to bring in more funds. Eventually, the group will work toward creating its own 501(c) status.

"The matching is something we just don't want to slip away," Crocker said. "We want definitely to get the word out."

Crocker said the Philomath Community Foundation was very receptive to the idea and understood the reasons for doing it.

"What they have done with what they've had is amazing, but just imagine what could be possible," Stanley said about the performing arts programs. "The reality is that the district funding is going to double in 10 years is not high. But the reality that in 10 years through this endowment that we could possibly double your budget, that could be a reality."

TO DONATE

The Philomath Performing Arts Benefit Fund is seeking donations in an effort to raise \$20,000 by the end of the year, taking advantage of a \$20,000 matching offer and serving as an additional stream of funding for ongoing program needs.

Gifts can be made by check to the Philomath Community Foundation. Donors asked to write "Philomath Performing Arts" in the memo. Mail to: Philomath Community Foundation, P.O. Box 1000, Philomath, OR 97370.

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