

CLARK MONTESSORI SCORES BIG FOR MUSIC EDUCATION

BY BRENDA C. MCCASKILL (BRENDA@ABOUTGREATERCINNATI.COM)

PHOTO PROVIDED BY CLARK MONTESSORI JR. & SR. HIGH SCHOOL

Mix hard work, dedication, a proven track record, creativity, perseverance, motivation, desire, talent, and teamwork, you might just win \$50,000. Just ask an area high school because it happened to them!

What started out as wishful thinking followed by quick mobilization and action became reality for the Clark Montessori Jr. & Sr. High School music department. They won \$50,000 as a grand prize winner in the Glee Give A Note Contest!

“We are all so excited and just can’t believe it.” said Chris Weber, orchestra teacher at Clark Montessori Jr. & Sr. High School.

Located in Cincinnati, Clark Montessori Jr. & Sr. High School, the nation’s first public Montessori high school, was recently announced as one of three grand prize winners in the Glee Give A Note Contest.

Over 1 million votes were cast online to pick the 73 winning schools to receive grants in this campaign to “save at-risk school music programs”. Awardees were determined by a panel composed of members of the National Association for Music Education (NAfME) who conducted the final round of judging based on creativity of video submitted, educational value, need, and online voting.

Presented by Twentieth Century Fox Television, Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment, the Na-



The Glee Give A Note \$50,000 grand prize will be used to purchase a variety of items/equipment for Clark Montessori’s music department.

tional Association for Music Education and its Give a Note Foundation, the Glee Give A Note Contest will distribute \$1 million to 73 schools nationwide in grants ranging from \$10,000 to \$50,000 to help save struggling music programs. The \$1 million breakdown: 3 grand prize grants of \$50,000 each; 10 first-place prize grants of \$25,000 each; and 60 second-place prize grants of \$10,000 each.

“We congratulate the winners and want the thousands of students across the country who submitted to know how impressed we were with their passion and talent.” commented GLEE’s co-creator and executive producer Ryan Murphy in a statement announcing the contest winners.

Music programs, which are often among the first in budget cuts facing schools, are indeed important and mean a lot to the students. This contest clearly put a spotlight on the passion for school music programs and showed that music education matters. The competition was stiff as many schools across the country with great music programs vied for the funds.

Students at Clark Montessori Jr. & Sr. High School as well as others across the country submitted creative and engaging 2 minute video submissions during the open call for entries in September 2011. In October, eligible entries which included Clark Montessori’s were posted online for public vote for one month.

Clark students conducted a grass

Continued on Page 2

Got a story idea or comment about this story? Send an email to editor@aboutgreatercincinnati.com.

CLARK MONTESSORI SCORES BIG FOR MUSIC EDUCATION (CONT'D)

roots effort to garner votes for their school - reaching out to their families, friends, and communities to get out the vote. Word quickly went viral and spread through Facebook, Twitter, word of mouth, and other local outlets and led to 8,838 votes being cast for Clark Montessori.

"We only heard about the contest a few days before the deadline and scrambled to get it shot and edited," said Caitie Linger, Clark Montessori's choir and music teacher.

Denise Dal Vera, a Clark Montessori parent took on the challenge to quickly pull together/coordinate the video submission, shoot the video (by the way, her camcorder broke and she bought a Nikon 5100 especially for this!), and edit the video.

Over the course of 7 days, the collaborative efforts between Dal Vera and the hard work and dedication of students and staff to get the entry done in time paid off! Their efforts led to a winning Clark Montessori entry and resulted in \$50,000 for the school's music program. Dal Vera, who got to announce the winning news over the school PA system, heard the delight and squeals of excitement from students and staff.

"The odds were against us... We were able to tell our story... and we're just elated...!" Dal Vera tells AboutGreaterCincinnati.com.

Among the 73 winning entries, other Greater Cincinnati/Ohio



schools chosen to each receive a \$10,000 grant were Winton Woods High School (Cincinnati, OH), Manchester Local Schools (Manchester, OH), and Fairborn Intermediate School (Fairborn, OH).

"Music education plays such a critical role in the development of our children, yet its place in our schools is not assured due to dire budget situations across the nation," said Michael Butera, executive director of the National Association for Music Education, in a press release announcing the grant recipients. "Bold and generous acts, like FOX's Glee Give a Note campaign, validate its importance and bring a sense of hope to thousands of educators and students."

The grand prize money will clearly come in handy at Clark! Over 50% of Clark Montessori students take music classes including band, steel band, choir, strings, guitar, drumline, contemporary percussion, and music technology. "Clark is bursting at the seams in terms of numbers of students wanting to learn music." said Josh Roderer, Clark's Band Director.

"Many of our instruments are damaged and some are over 30 years old and in serious need of repair."

Being a winner of \$50,000 and how to spend it is now the talk of Clark Montessori. "We are currently meeting as a department to decide this [how to spend the money], but we do know at least some of it will go toward saxophones, new steel drum stands and mallets, choral music, and a cabinet for violins." shared Bruce Weil, Clark's Steel Drum Band Director. "Overall, we have a large need for instruments, equipment and repairs."

Winning a grand prize in the Glee Give A Note Contest was not only a great present left under the tree over the holidays to help with the needs of the music department at Clark Montessori, but also a great way to start the New Year and a testament to the school working together to make a dream reality!

"We are very grateful that our school was selected out of all the worthy entries." Bruce Weil tells AboutGreaterCincinnati.com. "Our mission is to include as many students as possible in our music curriculum regardless of their backgrounds, experience or ability. We will use this grant money to sustain this goal for as long as we can!"

Bravo to all involved!

Got a story idea or comment about this story? Send an email to editor@aboutgreatercincinnati.com.