



Henry for Music makes inaugural donation

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Henry for Music Founder Jerry Hesselink, center, stands with officials at Henry County Middle School and Communities in Schools of Henry County during his first donation of instruments to the school music program. (Special Photo)

McDONOUGH — While some school music programs flourish, others are challenged to match instruments with youngsters from low-income families.

That is where Henry for Music Founder Jerry Hesselink and his partnership with Communities in Schools of Henry County comes into play. Music education can be a relatively expensive endeavor, said Hesselink, who recently visited a local school music program.

“The students could not get into band the first term,” he said. “Their family was not able to afford to either rent or buy the instrument. And then of course you have to buy the uniform.”

He is pushing to be sure young people can realize their talent on musical instruments by connecting “unused or unwanted” musical instruments, refurbishing them and transferring them to music teachers in the area.

“We’re primarily putting these music instruments in the hands of the instructors at the schools, (as) music teachers are notifying Communities in Schools of Henry County,” said Hesselink, noting the organization is helping to identify the school-level need.

The endeavor, he said, matches well with the Communities in Schools mission to provide resources that help students succeed academically. “That helps support their academic achievement as they move toward graduation and that is one of Communities in Schools’ primary efforts,” he said.

Hesselink recently joined Communities in Schools officials at Henry County Middle to present the school music program with six refurbished Henry for Music instruments.

The Dec. 7 donation was the first in his Henry for Music endeavor, adapted locally from Hungry for Music, which supports music education by acquiring and distributing musical instruments to under-served children who are “hungry” to play. He said the partnership was able to donate trombones, trumpets and clarinets to the Henry County Middle music program. Music Director Pamela Burgess, a clarinet player herself, accepted the instruments.

Hesselink said the school could use more trumpets, flutes, baritones and snare drum sets to fulfill the need for another 25 students who have expressed interest in music but cannot afford to buy or rent the instruments. “By getting the instrument to the child that takes a big burden off the child and at least gets them started in a band, playing an instrument,” said Hesselink.

“We’re trying to entice the public to look in their attics and find those instruments that they stopped playing when they were in high school or college and put them back in circulation,” he continued. “We still need more, like flutes, percussion, baritones, alto saxophones — and more trumpets and clarinets.”

Hesselink said he gets valuable support from local music stores who help accept and refurbish donated instruments. So far, McDonough Music, 184 John Frank Ward Blvd. in McDonough, and TLS Music, 3283 Ga. 42 in Stockbridge, have signed on.

McDonough Music co-owner Nathan Adamson has played guitar for nearly half a century. He started as a young child and said he wants to see other young people enjoy music as he has throughout his life.

“There are a lot of needy kids out there, and we really want to get the instruments in their hands,” said Adamson. “That child — you never know — they might be the next Jimi Hendrix. But if they don’t ever get an instrument, you’ll never know.”

To learn more, email henryformusic@aol.com or call 770-342-9045.