

## Music For Life Community Outreach – Plano Community Band

~ Denise Guilbert & Jennifer Breitzmann

The idea was born over dinner (and drinks) with friends from the Plano Community Band (PCB) and the San Antonio Wind Symphony (SAWS). The discussion centered around Community Band issues. Funding, repertoire, concerts, audiences, what brings in a crowd? SAWS had great success sharing a concert with a middle school band. Students performed the first half of the concert and SAWS performed the second half.

The ideas started to flow. What if PCB did a side-by-side concert? What if we chose their UIL contest music AND what if we helped them learn it in a clinic setting?

With the permission of key PCB board members, the beginning foundation was set. Title I middle schools were to be our focus. Conversation was held with each of the four Title I Head Band Directors in Plano and two of them were very interested if logistics could be worked out.

At their September 2015 meeting, the PCB Board gave the official green light to partner with Bowman Middle School Band, Mark Caspersen, director and Wilson Middle School Band, Robin Owens, director. The project was christened “Music for Life” in memory of our Conductor Emeritus, Tommy Guilbert. Dates were approved by the schools and their administrators and put on the master calendar for February of 2016.

### Goals:

1. Model for middle school band students that Music is for Life
2. Assist the band director with UIL contest music
3. Demonstrate our commitment to the betterment of Plano young people
4. Generate new audience members for PCB performances
5. Develop future members of the PCB

Early December saw the selection of the music by the middle school directors. All six pieces were ordered for the PCB library and paid for out of our music budget. Joe Frank (Artistic Director) and Jim

Carter (Associate Conductor) chose the 25 talented musicians for the “Mini Band” that would go into the schools. All but one of them have teaching experience in public school. Mr. Outlier chose IT from the beginning of his career and is a fabulous performer.

A four member “Momtourage” support team was formed from the band to assist the day of each clinic with the pizza supper. All members chosen to go into the schools completed a Plano Independent School District background check.

Two hours of PCB rehearsal time were devoted to the six pieces. The middle school directors came to the rehearsal to listen and make notes.

On clinic day, the PCB Mini Band arrived at 4:30 pm. Bowman chose to break into small groups or sectionals to work for 45 minutes. Wilson chose full band for the entire time. Pizza supper was provided and served by the PCB Momtourage and both bands went back to work as a full band with Joe Frank making comments and suggestions as each director worked their band. Parents came at 7:00 to hear a 15-minute concert of each band. Joe spoke briefly about the talented kids and dedicated directors and parents. He invited all to our concert on April 24th and to our summer series at Plano’s Haggard Park.



PCB members lead sectional clinics at Bowman Middle School.



PCB members “sit in” with middle school students at Bowman.

Each middle school band member received a Plano Community Band pencil and a magnet with our performance schedule. Comments from the two middle school visits:

*“This was an awesome night! The kids had so much fun and the parents loved the short concert at the end”.*

– Mark Caspersen, Bowman MS Band Director

*“It was a mountaintop experience. There were so many special and musical moments this evening. Thank you, PCB for coming.”*

– Robin Owens, Wilson MS Band Director

*“You know, you guys that work in the schools all the time already*

# EDUCATION OUTREACH

*know this, but how amazing to share my passion for music with kids.” – Chris Heider, PCB Outlier IT guy*

*“I overheard several of the kids talking to each other. They said they were having fun and learning a lot!” – Jennifer Breitzmann, PCB French horn*

*“This was a wonderful idea and so well presented. Our next in service meeting will feature Robin and Mark giving a report on the success of this outreach. Please tell me you will do this again next year.” – Kathy Kuddes, Fine Arts Director, Plano Independent School District*

Plano Community Band is funded in part by a grant from the City of Plano and each month we make a report to the Cultural Arts Commission on our performances and outreach. We were pleased to have a member of the Commission at each of our middle schools clinics.

*“I had no idea what to expect when I went to Bowman to see the PCB clinic. All of those kids running around like crazy but when they picked up their instruments and sat down to play, it was a transformation” – Tom Venner, Cultural Arts Commissioner.*

The Bowman and Wilson Middle school bands were special guests of the PCB at our April 24th *Modern Masters* concert at the Eisemann Performance Hall. They had reserved seating and the middle school directors each conducted the PCB in one of their contest pieces. Robin Owens from Wilson conducted “Sons of Liberty” (Larry Neeck, Barnhouse) and Mark Caspersen conducted “Abracadabra” (Frank Ticheli, Manhattan Beach Music.) The students fingered along with their parts as the Plano band performed! It was great to have the enthusiasm of the young crowd in the audience.



**Wilson MS Director Robin Owens and PCB Director Joe Frank confer during combined PCB/Wilson band rehearsal at Wilson Middle School.**



**Bowman directors attended PCB rehearsal to prepare for the clinic. PCB Director Joe Frank (left), with Bowman Assistant Director Kelsie Dunham and Bowman Director Mark Caspersen.**



**PCB member Cindy Harder demonstrates alternate fingerings to Wilson students.**

In a fun sidebar, “Abracadabra” was commissioned by the Driscoll Middle School Band of San Antonio, TX, Richard Gonzales, director. Richard and his wife Holly are mem-

bers of SAWS and were at the original dinner where this outreach project began to take shape.

Could your community band do the same? YES! It is a relatively inexpensive proposition. Our total cost was right at \$900.00. This included six band arrangements, imprinted pencils and magnets and pizza and water for 230 middle school and community band members. Each PCB Mini band member donated a total of seven hours to the cause, all of whom left their day job early on the two clinic days so we could begin at 4:30. This donation in kind would be valued at almost \$5500.00. But as the old Mastercard commercials reminded us....

**“Pizza and water - \$345. Music - \$390.00. Sharing the joy of Music for Life – PRICELESS”**



**PCB Director Joe Frank addresses the parents at Bowman Middle School during combined PCB/Bowman band performance.**

*I just wanted to thank you guys again for the clinic and the special concert feature for Wilson. It’s all such a cool idea and truly helpful. It was fun conducting, too. Thank for doing something so valuable and inspiring for so many people. – Robin Owens, Wilson Band*



**Mark Caspersen, Kelsie Dunham, Joe Frank, Jim Carter**