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City of Stamford

Board of Representatives

Subject: Project Music

Dear Board Members,

Even on a subliminal level, every human knows the importance of music in our lives. We hear music on the radio with the morning news, we hum a tune while shopping or mowing the lawn, we sing lullabies to our newborns. Consider just for a moment, what the holiday season would be like without our favorite melody; your graduation ceremony without “Pomp and Circumstance” or the President’s arrival without “Hail to the Chief.”

Music exists in the background of our daily lives, but for the lucky few, **Music IS Their Life.** How fortunate for those who find happiness with a piano, a flute or even a garbage can lid!

My husband was known in this community as a State Senator, but he was at heart always a musician. Politics was secondary to his existence, when music was involved. He repeatedly stated the people were the spirit of the community, but music was its soul. As a music teacher and department head, band leader and church choir director, he was much beloved by his students. These students went on to become professional musicians as well as teachers. Imagine my delight to find that many of my grandchildren were taught music theory and practice by their grandfather’s students! Mr. T., as he was known, was intimately familiar with the importance of music in our lives. He believed in introducing and sustaining music programs for children of all ages. In 1965 Tony was given the opportunity through a Federal Grant, Title 9, to develop a free music school for Stamford children, grades 4 through 12. The children were loaned instruments and sheet music and were taught by professionals after the regular school day. His Summer Music program, offered at no charge to the students, and was in existence for over thirty years,

also gave children the opportunity to practice their skills as well as perform for local audiences when school was not in session. He gave students the opportunity to continue their love of music outside of the school environment.

What my husband knew in the 1960's '70's and '80's has now become established fact. Students who study music as a part of their in-school curriculum are better readers, have less trouble with mathematics and are able to solve scientific problems. Additionally, music students are better at adapting to society's myriad of cultural levels. So you now ask how? How can music impact the lives of our children so profoundly?

In March 1991 the National Commission of Music Education published a report which detailed the following findings:

“When a child studies music, significant elements of his or her education find focus and expression:

- developing the ability to understand and use symbols in new contexts;
- discovering the power, precision, and control of mathematics in unexpected ways;
- finding and directing personal creativity;
- exercising the diverse skills of problem-solving;
- experiencing the joy of self-expression;
- growing into the liberation acquired through self-discipline; and
- participating in the deeply human satisfaction of shared work and the gratification of challenges met.”

Interestingly enough, the report also concludes that the connection between music education and changes in students' behaviors offers direct and immediate benefits, not only to themselves, but to the educational system as a whole.

Studies consistently prove that music education improves SAT scores, school attendance, the ability to work in teams, self-esteem, self discipline, creativity, reasoning skills and basic math and reading skills. As Keith Urban, country music star once said, “Music allows children to dream. It gives them a way to express themselves. It gives them hope, inspiration, passion and laughter.”

Each of us intrinsically knows that music impacts our lives as adults. We also know that even the youngest child responds positively to melodic tunes and repetitive, catchy songs. Children learn their abc's through music, some learn fractions and math in a song, we learn history by singing patriotic songs and culture through folk tunes. Music, in and of itself, is vital to fundamental learning; music theory and practice is vital to the education process. Music opens the door of success for students who may have problems in other educational or social areas. Music is the channel through which creativity, imagination and self-expression find release. Music should never be relegated to the sidelines of decreasing budgets, because without music we lose what makes us human.

I strongly urge you to research the importance of music in our children's lives. There are hundred of websites and organizations that are working to show the relationship between music and educational achievement. Please do not make the mistake that only reading, writing and 'rithmetic are the essential tools needed to succeed in our society. Make the choice to keep music in the lives of our children.

I am asking for your financial support to restore Project Music in my husband's memory, who as a music educator and musician knew the importance of this wonderful program. He travelled to Washington D.C. for the original grant which the City of Stamford continued for decades and I now ask you to strongly consider providing funds to restart Project Music and keep his memory and vision alive.

Respectfully,

Christel Truglia

c.c. Mayor David Martin