



Annual Report 2023-2024

### LISTEN LEARN INSPIRE SUPPORT

# FROM THE BOARD AND STAFF



What a remarkable year it has been for North Valley Music School!

Since the groundbreaking ceremony in April 2024, over \$1.5 million has been raised for the Be Instrumental capital campaign to build a new music school. Happily, that means there is less than 10% of the fundraising goal to reach. Well done, everyone!

Construction at Smith Fields is progressing steadily and remains on schedule. By the end of 2024, the building will be weather-tight, allowing the team to focus on completing the interior spaces. If everything goes as planned, NVMS will proudly welcome students into the new facility for the Fall 2025 program year.

Over the past two years, our dedicated NVMS champions have put in tremendous effort to reach this milestone. The finish line is clearly in sight, and with less than \$600,000 left to raise, I am fully confident that our community will rally for this final push. Together, we will create a vibrant space where music education, performance, and appreciation will thrive for generations to come.

Thank you to all NVMS donors, staff, faculty, families, board members, advisors, and community partners. Your contributions are vital to the lasting legacy NVMS will create for Whitefish and its neighboring communities. Let's finish strong together!

#### -Christine Rossi, Board President



"Make new friends but keep the old, one is silver and the other's gold."

This timeless adage encapsulates the spirit of NVMS and the incredible community we've built together. As we look to the future, I'm filled with both excitement and gratitude.

Our new music facility is taking shape, a tangible symbol of our commitment to providing exceptional music education. This growth, however, is not merely physical; it's a reflection of our unwavering dedication to nurturing young talent and fostering a vibrant musical culture.

Change is inevitable. It's how we navigate it that defines us. As we embrace the challenges and opportunities ahead, we'll do so with both grit and grace. Grit will drive us forward while grace will guide our actions and ensure a smooth transition.

I believe in the power of steady progress. By building upon our strengths and embracing innovation, we can create a sustainable future for NVMS. Your support, whether through donations, volunteering, or proudly sharing our mission, is instrumental in making this vision a reality.

Brick by brick, note by note, we will make this building grow. Together, we're writing the next chapter of NVMS's story. Thank you for being a part of this incredible journey.

#### -Deidre Corson, Executive Director

# **2023-2024 YEAR IN REVIEW**

North Valley Music School began the Program Year with a record 289 students enrolled. By the end of the year, we had 871 in private lessons, group classes, ensembles, and summer camps! All ages, all abilities, and walks of life warmed our old house with the sounds of music.

The 2023 Great Fish Community Challenge was dedicated to the Be Instrumental capital campaign and broke all campaign records! Raising over \$360,000 from 400+donors, it was an epic year. With the success, the music school was able to break ground in April of 2024.

NVMS also welcomed new instructors Mary Notess (oboe), Kate McMahon (banjo), and new interns, Trevin Inabnit (clarinet, beginner saxophone and piano) and Grace Cincis (voice, piano, and Glee Club).

The Flathead Valley Youth Symphony also launched and celebrated much first-year success. Read more on page six (6).

The Fall workshop with Jack Gladstone and the Spring workshop featuring Contra Dance were both quite moving and well-attended.

The year's Fall Faculty Concert also included a lovely social with food and drink to celebrate the music school's silver anniversary and share capital campaign updates.

After six weeks of workshopping new songs, the new Songwriter Class shared their original music with the public at an After Hours recital at Slow Burn Records. Jenny Bevill, Heath Howell, Katie Carey and instructor Jamie Wyman took turns playing songs and telling stories "in the round."

Additionally, our community-driven organization worked with Columbia Falls Chamber of Commerce to get the musical movie Rock Dog for the outdoor movie series. This annual family-friendly night also included a short video about the capital campaign.

The scholarship program also hit a new record with 51 students receiving over \$35,000.

The 20204 Montana Music Event featured nine great local artists and once again, was a beautiful evening on Stillwater Lake. If you haven't been to this event yet, don't miss out next year! Thanks to our event sponsors, Charles Schwab, Jeremiah Johnson Brewing Co., Georges Distributing, DeSoto Grill, the Bluegrass Jammers, Volunteers, and everyone that made this magical evening possible!

# NVMS BY THE NUMBERS 2023-2024

Total registered students: 871 (+30%)

Private lessons throughout the year

11,387

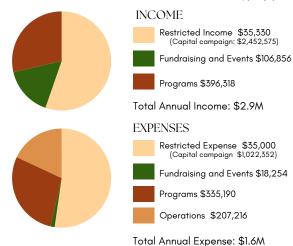
Group classes and ensembles

441 (+5%)

Scholarships awarded:

\$32,000 to 51 Students

## ANNUAL OPERATING BUDGET: \$595,660





# DONOR SPOTLIGHT THE DAVIS FAMILY

May 12, 2024

North Valley Music School PO Box 4446 Whitefish MT 59937

re: Capital Campaign gift



In addition to playing the piano, Kenneth also formed dance bands that played at various venues in northwestern Montana and the Hi-Line oil fields. Following college and a long and successful career in business, he renewed his interest in playing piano and organ duets, and even accompanying a group of "girl" singers in his retirement community. When macular degeneration made sight-reading difficult, his daughter made magnified versions of the first bars of his favorite tunes. Once launched, he could play those pieces by ear and by heart.

Needless to say, his children took music lessons, too. Some branched out to play other instruments like the banjo, but all shared an appreciation for various forms of music. And, his musical legacy has continued into his grandchildren's generation.

Please acknowledge this memorial gift to his daughter: LeAnn Davis Lane

Yours truly.

Margaret S. Davis (former daughter-in-law)

For more information about Be Instrumental, please see pages 7-8.









year, he gave the Most Improved Musician award to the entire flute section! That's the tirst time he's given the award to an entire section. I was so proud!"

Bravo, Jenn! And congratulations to the promising young musicians. We are grateful for you and the experiences for the schools, these kids, and their musical future.

# **FACULTY SPOTLIGHT**



Jennifer Hawken began playing flute when she was 12 and soon knew that flute would be a major part of her life. She studied flute with Mary Karen Clardy at the University of North Texas and Sydney Carlson at the University of Houston. Currently, she is the principal flutist in the Glacier Symphony Orchestra and has also appeared as a soloist with the Brazosport Symphony Orchestra. Jennifer has given solo recitals and played in many chamber music settings and equally at home in both classical and jazz. She taught high school band for a few years and privately for over 25 years. She enjoys hiking, sewing, and reading good books with a cup of tea.

In addition to private lessons, Jenn is also one of NVMS's Teaching Artists in Residency. This program connects NVMS faculty to music departments in public schools in the area. Teaching Artists work to fill the gaps and assist where public school instructors need them most. NVMS budgets 100+ classroom hours for these important mentorship moments across several schools in the Flathead Valley. NVMS faculty have assisted public school teachers and students with violin, viola, cello, flute, and more.

"In the spring semester of 2024, I did quite a few flute sectionals at Whitefish High School," Jenn said. "Matt King is the band director there and gives a Most Improved Musician award every year in May. This year, he gave the Most Improved Musician award to the entire flute section! That's the first time he's ever given the award to an entire section. I was so proud!"

Bravo, Jenn! And congratulations to the promising young musicians. We are grateful to be part of these important experiences for the schools, the kids, and their musical future.

"The kids were so excited! One of them is also a student of mine at North Valley Music School and he was almost in tears."



# SCHOLARSHIP SPOTLIGHT GRACE CINCIS



Grace Cincis is a piano, voice, and ukulele intern at North Valley Music School.

The oldest in a family of six children, her parents say she sang before she could speak.

Grace has been in love with music since elementary school when she took her first guitar class. Later in high school, she also participated in Music Theater.

This summer, she gave a speech and performed at the annual Music Matters Luncheon to share her experience as a student, scholarship recipient, and now an intern at NVMS.

Robin Williams once said, "You know what music is? God's little reminder that there's something else besides us in this universe; a harmonic connection between all living beings. Everywhere, even the stars."

I have been attending NVMS since I was a freshman in high school. My grandmother gave me a few lessons as a gift and I started by taking piano lessons from Mr. Dan Kohnstamm, who accompanied me today. From then on, I have been taking them ever since. These piano lessons helped determine the course of my future. NVMS involved me in their new internship program and now, I am studying Music Education at Flathead Valley Community College and hope to become a choir teacher.

NVMS has been supportive in so many ways. For example, I have received a scholarship every year for part of my lessons. This has enabled me to continue studying with Mr. Kohnstamm. Additionally, he has been generous enough to accompany me at my college recitals. These piano lessons are an essential part of my education. Recently, I have started to work at NVMS as a real music teacher, teaching piano, voice, and ukulele. The staff has been very welcoming and if I have questions, I am able to reach out and have them answered.

My experience at NVMS helped shape the course of my future. Without NVMS, I would not have been able to achieve my dream of teaching and being a part of the music world. I've learned so much from my lessons and now from my teaching role. Thanks, NVMS!

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# PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT FLATHEAD VALLEY YOUTH SYMPHONY

Performing in a symphonic orchestra at a young age is mentally stimulating and emotionally profound. Students grow as human beings and musicians, all while creating life-long memories alongside their peers. This year, NVMS launched the new Flathead Valley Youth Symphony.



"Here, students can make new friends outside of their school and community, create lasting memories, and further develop their musicianship through classical, contemporary, and popular orchestral repertoire," Holdhusen said.

The first rehearsal took place on Monday, October 2, 2023. Enrollment in the first year saw 62 young musicians from surrounding schools including Bigfork, Columbia Falls, Kalispell, Somers, West Glacier, and Whitefish. FVYS also invites home-





The Flathead Valley Youth Symphony is an orchestral ensemble for talented middle and high school string, wind, and percussion players to gain valuable life skills, make lasting relationships, and explore beautiful music at a high level.

The group is led by NVMS alumni, Eric Holdhusen. Eric graduated from Whitefish High School where he excelled in band and orchestra. Holdhusen started violin lessons at four years old and picked up trumpet in 7th grade with the guidance of Jenanne Solberg and Mark McCrady, two of the valley's finest musicians. He earned his Bachelor of Music at St. Olaf College in Minnesota. In 2022, he returned to Montana to teach the orchestra at Flathead High School.

schooled musicians who otherwise wouldn't have such an opportunity. Administrative assistant, Melanie Felsch helped tremendously and even did some conducting. Registration is \$75/semester and scholarships are available.

The youth symphony held two incredible concerts in 2023, as well. A winter concert is scheduled for Monday, December 2, 2024 at 7 pm at the Flathead High School auditorium. Donations to support this program can be made at northvalleymusicschool.org.



# CAPITAL CAMPAIGN SPOTLIGHT BE INSTRUMENTAL UPDATES



When North Valley Music School was founded over twenty-five years ago, few people could have foreseen the growth in the area and the huge demand for music education. Thankfully, some did. The nonprofit's co-founders, Betty Lou Wambeke and Betsy Kohnstamm, started small and focused on quality instruction and building relationships when they opened North Valley Music School in 1997. The overwhelming demand for music education cannot be met in the current space. Together, the community is supporting efforts for a new facility specifically designed for music education, to house the school's growth, with ample space for expanded programs and accessibility for all ages, all abilities, for all people who desire a music education.



Be Instrumental, the capital campaign to build a new music school and campus moved into its final phase of fundraising at the end of Program Year 2022–2023. When Program Year 2023–2024 started, the new music school still needed \$2.3 million in funding. NVMS remained enthusiastic, encouraging the community's continued support. NVMS hosted events, wrote grants, spoke with the media, and championed all the benefits that more music education in a state–of-the–art facility would bring to Flathead County and Montana. Happily, the nonprofit was invited to participate in the Great Fish Community Challenge in 2023, with the use of funds dedicated to the capital campaign.



We are the music makers
We are the dreamers of dreams









On the first day of the Challenge, Whitefish Community Foundation offered a \$1,000 incentive grant to the organization having the most donors on launch day. NVMS raised \$48,000 from almost 175 people on day one, showing strong support for the project. NVMS engaged over 400 donors in six weeks and won the Biggest Catch award. In fact, NVMS supporters would donate a record-breaking \$366,962 that year, the largest amount ever raised by any single nonprofit in the campaign's history. NVMS also received the Most Improved Fishing Award because of a 362% increase from the prior year.



"Music matters to Montana and the Flathead Valley," says NVMS Board President, Christine Rossi. "NVMS is honored and inspired by the strength in such numbers. This clearly demonstrates that the students, families, and communities value this project. Countless caring people have invested much time and energy into the future of our music school. The entire team is so excited to see this dream come true."

Deep appreciation is extended to the many stakeholders of the project including the City of Whitefish, Project Whitefish Kids, the M.J. Murdoch Charitable Trust, Whitefish Community Foundation, and many more. For more information and to donate, please visit www.nvms.me and BE INSTRUMENTAL today!



## MILESTONES

- \$350K awarded in the Great Fish Community Challenge Fall '23
- NVMS and PWK hosted DankeFest to thank donors Fall '23
- 7 Studio Sponsorships secured by Winter '23
- Groundbreaking at Smith Fields Spring '24
- Foundation poured, walls framed Summer '24



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# SPRING SPOTLIGHT

### CHRIS SAND & THE MAGIC BEAN CLUB









To celebrate Mother's Day in Spring 2024, NVMS hosted memorable music moments for kids of all ages.

Thanks to a grant from Humanities Montana, NVMS brought Chris "Sandman" Sand up from Missoula to play songs from MAGIC BEANS, his first children's music album made right here in Montana.

Chris grew up in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains and has been making music for years. He tours North America with a unique blend of original folk, punk, rap, and cowboy music. Sandman uses humor, music, and poetry to tell stories, build connections, and get people thinking (and singing!).

The Magic Bean Club is Sand's three-piece children's band featuring Chris (guitar, vocals), Grace Decker (fiddle, harmonies) & Ian Smith (multi-instrumentalist). Together, they played 'Songs for Sprouting Children & Other Human Beans' during three concerts in May.

Performances at the Whitefish Community Library and the Columbia Falls Imaginelf locations were free and open to the public. A separate, private event was also held for the after-school youth at the Glacier Boys & Girls Club in Evergreen.

Audiences enjoyed songs such as "Baby Houdini," "Silly Not Sad," and "Cow Cow Mama Cow." Everyone was encouraged to sing and dance and the gunny sacks provided for the 'jumpin' beans' were quite popular.

Kids received a free copy of "The MAGIC BEANS Songbook," a 36-page lyric and coloring book featuring Sand's songs, plus one by his daughter. Each song is paired with wonderful illustrations by Cooper Malin. Many thanks to the artists, the families, our grantor, and our venue partners for making these fun events possible.



In Program Year 23-24, North Valley Music School launched another new music program for the community.

Music & Movement, a six-week series designed for older adults, combines the love of music, the benefits of group education, and the positive impact from physical fitness. This new program strives to facilitate human potential for Montana's aging population while building strong relationships through the joyful experience of music.

The first session was hosted at The Springs at Whitefish, senior living facility in Whitefish, MT. No previous drumming experience was necessary and the program could be done from a seated or standing position. The first session focused on percussion and was taught by Jeremy Reinbolt.

Drumming combines the benefits of movement with the benefits of music-making. Using wooden and foam drum sticks on buckets, participants engaged in a new kind of wellness experience based on principles of rhythm and movement. Together, the group of learners explored how drumming and active music listening can improve mood, boost the immune system, and provide an outlet for creativity. Music and movement supports a healthy body and mind.

This direct engagement with a teaching artist and a core group of learners over several weeks enabled participants to process emotions, improve wellness, and build community. Studies have shown that lifelong engagement in musical activities might help maintain the brain in a younger state.

Thanks to a grant from the Montana Arts Council, this program was free for residents of the facility, the public, and arts learners of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities. Over time, the program hopes to travel to different locations and explore different musical expressions.



Learners gained a better sense of community, received both mental and physical stimulation, and gained an increased appreciation for music.





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