



Annual Report

2024-2025



LISTEN. LEARN. INSPIRE. SUPPORT.

From the Board

Dear NVMS Family,

We did it! After years of dreaming, planning, fundraising, and building, our new music school is open and welcoming students. As I reflect on this incredible journey, I'm filled with gratitude for everyone who made it possible.

When we launched the Be Instrumental campaign, I knew it would take dedication and community support. What I didn't fully anticipate was how this project would bring out the best in everyone connected to NVMS. Projects like these don't happen by accident, and this one certainly didn't happen without extraordinary effort from so many.

To everyone who made this possible – our board members, fundraising team, advisors, staff, faculty, families and students, community partners, volunteers, and Executive Director Deidre Corson – thank you. You showed up when it mattered most. You turned a dream into reality and never lost sight of our mission.

NVMS has stood the test of time for nearly three decades due to strong community support and committed leaders. Building this new campus was our most ambitious undertaking, and you approached it with the same dedication that has sustained NVMS through every challenge.

My term as Board Chair comes to a close at year's end. Leading this board and the building project has been an honor. Not just because we raised funds or constructed a building, but because I got to work alongside people who believe that music matters and that community is built through shared purpose.

I'm not walking away entirely. I'll still be here, supporting the mission and helping secure the future of NVMS. I have complete confidence in the new board chair and leadership team, whose skills, vision, and dedication are exactly what NVMS needs for this next phase. They have the experience and passion to steward our mission forward.

This new campus is a world-class musical environment that will serve the Flathead Valley for generations to come. It's a safe, inclusive space where music education, performance, and appreciation will thrive. And it exists because of you.

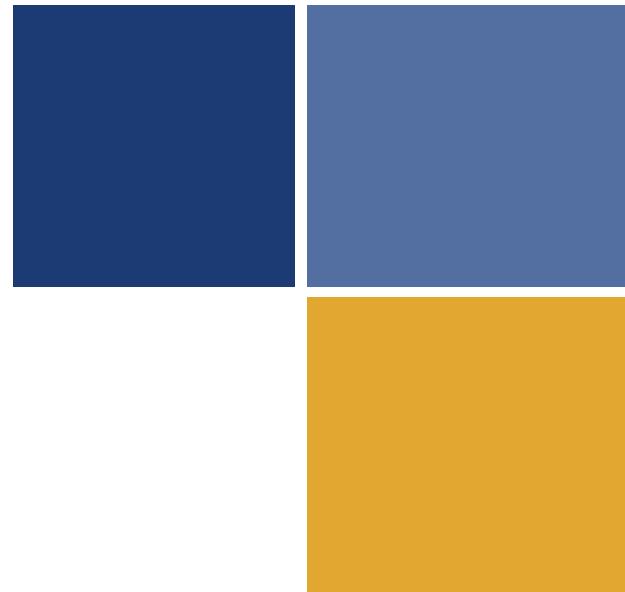
Thank you for your support, your generosity, and your unwavering commitment to NVMS.



With gratitude,

Christine Rossi

Board Chair





From the Staff

It is with immense pride and a heart full of gratitude that I reflect upon this past year at the North Valley Music School (NVMS)—a year that has been nothing short of transformative. This was the year we stopped simply planning and started building; the year we traded our dreams for concrete reality.

The successful completion of our capital campaign and the long-anticipated move into our new, accessible, state-of-the-art facility is the physical realization of your collective belief in the power of music. Thank you. This achievement belongs to every single one of the hundreds of unique donors, the volunteers, the staff, and the board members who made the impossible inevitable.

We successfully repositioned NVMS not as a niche provider of music lessons and classes, but as a central hub for cultural vitality, youth development, and community. You invested in us because you understood the transcendent purpose of this expansion: we are now able to serve the students previously stuck on waiting lists, provide a truly accessible learning environment for all, and offer a dedicated community recital space that enriches the entire region. We proved that the Music School is an essential service for arts enrichment and civic engagement, not a luxury.

The trust you placed in us through this campaign has created a foundation of accountability. We committed to a vision, and we executed it with discipline and transparency—from the groundbreaking ceremony to the very grand opening.

As we turn the page into a new year in our new home, our commitment remains unwavering: to foster artistic citizenship and ensure that the opportunity to learn, create, and perform music is available to everyone.

Thank you for being the dedicated partners who helped us realize this vision. We look forward to seeing you at our new campus and hearing the music that this incredible community has made possible.



Musically and gratefully,

Deidre Corson

Executive Director



2024-2025

Year In Review

The 2024-2025 program year was a period defined by transition, community faith, and an incredible commitment to the future of music education in Northwest Montana. It began in the comfort of our beloved, familiar old house on Spokane Avenue—a space rich with nearly three decades of musical memories.

We kicked off the year with another successful Great Fish Challenge, an annual community fundraising event that ensures music remains accessible to all. Even while managing the complexities of the move, our programs flourished. Our faculty presented a fantastic compilation of talent at the Feel the Love Faculty Concert, reminding our community that the soul of NVMS resides in the gifted artists who teach here.

We were thrilled to celebrate the very successful second year of the Flathead Valley Youth Symphony, engaging over 70 young musicians in high-level orchestral performance. Alongside this, we began a crucial expansion of our core offerings, adding new opportunities in clarinet, oboe, and dedicated jazz studies, which prepared us for the growth the new facility would accommodate.

Our commitment to community engagement remained strong, with NVMS presenting three popular public events and workshops, including a lively Contra Dance and our regular Songwriter Nights at Slow Burn. Furthermore, our focused summer offering, Camp Festival Amadeus, was a blast with 34 passionate student musicians involved, marking a successful close to our instructional year.

Throughout the year, the vision for our new home became a visible reality as the building slowly grew, serving as a powerful, physical testament to the generosity of our donors. Our community successfully raised the money needed to make this dream a reality! We are forever grateful to the many volunteers who made the move into the new space possible.

The Grand Opening of our new school closed the year with hundreds of community members showing up to support the future of music education.

As we looked back on the challenges and successes within the old walls, the promise of the new facility provided unstoppable momentum, proving that the dedication of our students, families, faculty, and supporters is truly instrumental to our mission.

Total Registered Students

762

Enrolled Private Lessons

416

Group Classes

116

Ensembles

146

Summer Camps

34

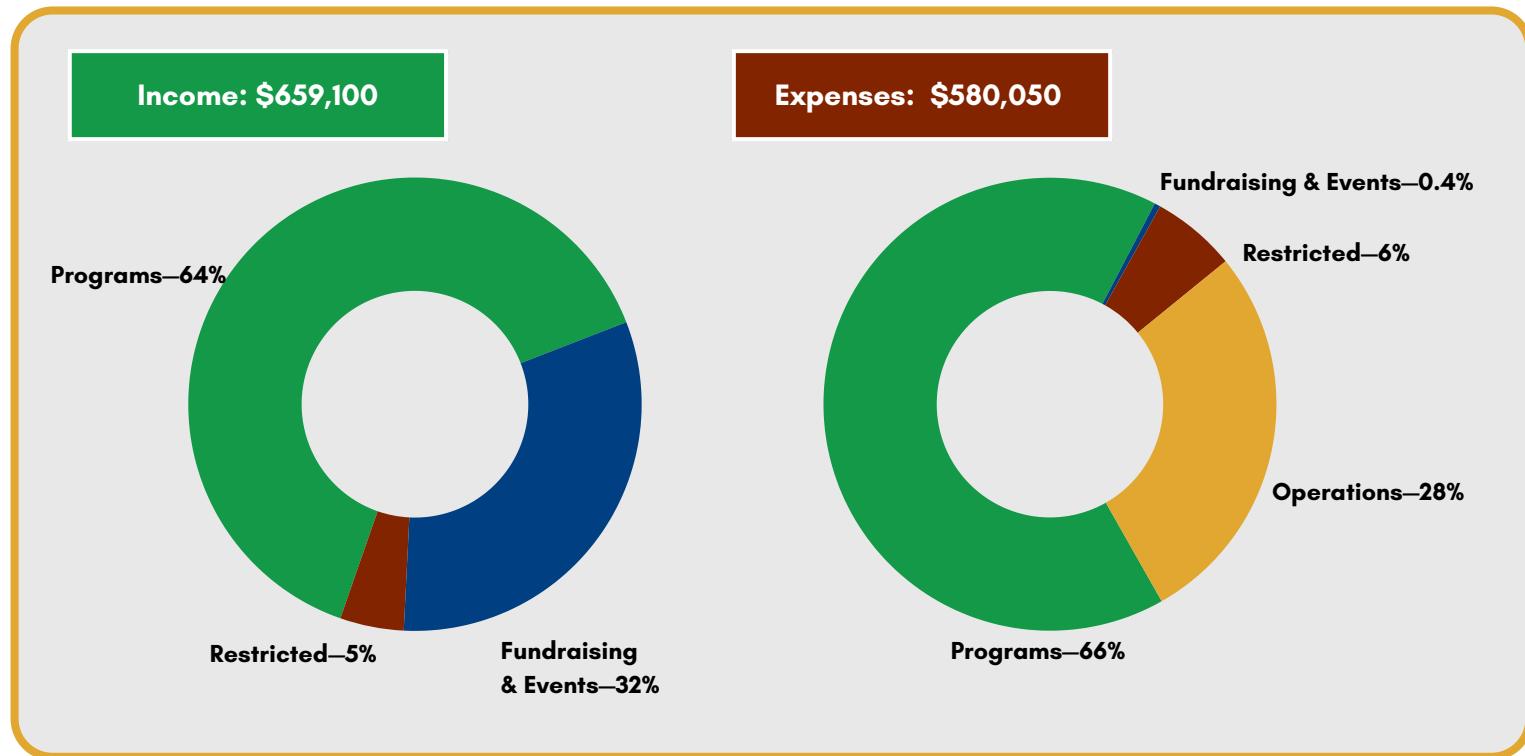
Scholarship Students

48 totaling \$30,100



2024-2025

Financials



INCOME	
Programs	\$420,300.00
Fundraising and Events	\$208,800.00
Restricted	\$30,000.00
TOTAL	\$659,100.00

EXPENSE	
Programs	\$382,100.00
Fundraising and Events	\$2,500.00
Restricted	\$35,000.00
General Operations	\$160,450.00

Annual Operating Budget: \$580,050.00



Faculty Spotlight

Dan Kohnstamm

Dan Kohnstamm is one of our piano instructors and has been on the North Valley Music School staff for eight years. He currently has twenty students and teaches four days a week in the afternoon, which is the prime time for student's learning. He is very pleased that the school has moved to its new location and that it has energized his students. The recital hall is a new experience for his students with its larger space and his studio is an attractive area to teach. He strives to have his students do four recitals per year, and prefers to refer to recitals as "shares."

Dan is a nationally certified piano instructor through the Music Teachers National Association. This Association has national, state and local affiliates and he currently serves as vice president with the local affiliate, the Kalispell Area Music Teachers Association. He likes being part of a larger "picture" and KAMTA and the state affiliate, Montana State Music Teachers Association, fills that professional role. The MSMTA just had its annual conference at Fairmont Hot Springs and it brought in a noted adjudicator and clinician, Dr. Kevin Chance, from the University of Alabama, to give workshops on technique and repertoire.

Dan's musical philosophy is to have music making an enjoyable activity and to meet the student's interests and capabilities. He has three students who have been, or are, piano interns at NVMS. One of his former students attends the University of Montana in Missoula and is planning on continuing his studies with a masters degree.



D'Andre Conant frequently competes and performs at MSMTA activities and is a dedicated musician.

Dan volunteered to be a part of the Board of Directors search for a new program director for the school and enjoyed working on the process with another teacher and the Board.

At the core of his music making is the enjoyment of ensemble playing. He continues to work with the staff at NVMS and with the Whitefish High School as the band accompanist for the District and State Music Festival, sponsored by the Montana High School Association. He has worked with WHS students as accompanist and coach for thirty-five years.

In addition to his piano instruction, he is a pianist for two churches in the Valley, which has been a lifetime goal. Being able to play music in a spiritual setting is especially gratifying for him. He has also been an accompanist for the Crown of the Continent Choir under the direction of Craig Hodges.

From Dan, "I would like to invite you to attend a "share" at the recital hall this year. We will have our remaining shares in November, December, March and June. Recital shares are a nice reflection of the student's work and parents and grandparents enjoy the occasions."

Dan would like to thank the staff at NVMS for their support. He really appreciates the role of the school to set up schedules and take care of the finances of running a musical studio. This enables us teachers to concentrate on teaching which is what we want to do and the staff makes it easy by their support of our efforts. Thank you NVMS!



Program Spotlight

Flathead Valley Youth Symphony

Orchestral performance hit a new high this year with the stunning success of the Flathead Valley Youth Symphony (FVYS). Originally the Whitefish Community Orchestra, which morphed into the NVMS Orchestra, (stopped because of COVID19), and now, the Flathead Valley Youth Symphony.

The program grew substantially, now serving over 70 talented young musicians from across the Valley. This growth necessitated an expansion of our structure, which included the successful launch of the intermediate Philharmonia, led by NVMS instructor, and Camp Festival Amadeus alumnus, Noah Certalic. The entire FVYS program flourished under the inspired direction of NVMS alumnus Eric Holdhussen, reinforcing the powerful legacy of our school's instruction and its ability to cultivate future music leaders.

"The Flathead Valley Youth Symphony is celebrating its third season with the addition of a second ensemble for students, the Philharmonia," says FVYS Director Holdhussen. "We started in the fall of 2023 with a group of 60 dedicated young musicians who brought all the requisite energy to establish a youth orchestra in the valley, and the numbers have steadily grown to the point where we couldn't even fit in our normal rehearsal space without splitting into two groups! I never would have dreamed that we would be here by year three, and I feel so lucky to have Noah Certalic on board with us to direct the new group."

Come join us for our concerts at Flathead High School at 7:00 pm on March 15th!

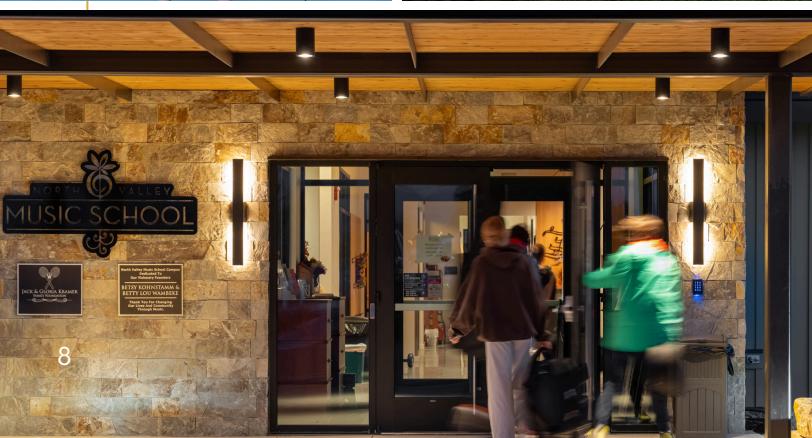


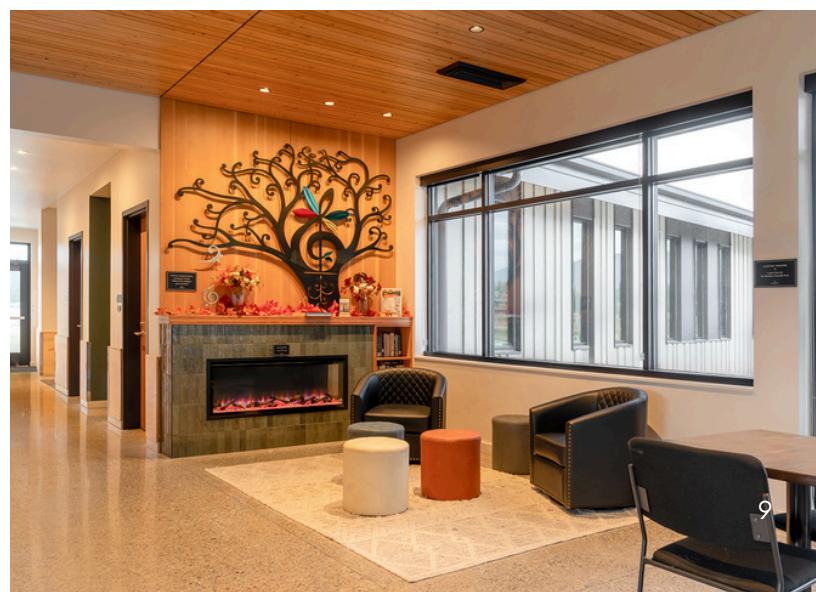


Grand Opening of the new school

After years of hard work, fundraising and dreaming, we opened our new community music school. It takes all of us to create something truly special. This campaign, from its earliest stages to the grand opening, was not a solo performance, but a true community effort.

Every person who believed in us—every donor, volunteer, advisor and board member—is a thread of the North Valley Music School fabric. Thank you for celebrating with us and for showing up to support the transformative power of music in the Flathead Valley.





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Family Spotlight

The Donaldsons

Dave Donaldson and Michelle Spring moved to Whitefish in 2015. Michelle is a Plastic Surgeon and co-owner of Mountain West Plastic Surgery and Medical Spa in Kalispell. When she is not working, Michelle can often be found with her horses, Jitske and Big Mac, and usually with one or two kids along for a ride. David is a retired U.S. Navy Corpsman with a long history of working with veterans with disabilities. He has had a lifelong love for music creation and consumption, collecting guitars and other "less pedestrian" musical instruments, and providing a space and resources for his kids to explore their own musical, and other interests. David is a lifelong snow skier and surfer.

Finnian, 13, an emerging multi-instrumentalist, has been taking guitar and bass guitar lessons with Tim T. for over two years and has taken drum lessons with Jeremy over the summer. Finn has been playing double bass in the Whitefish Middle School orchestra and bass guitar in the Jazz band for the last three years and was recently selected to join the Flathead Valley Youth Symphony Philharmonia. When he is not playing music, Finn can be found skiing on the "Big", climbing at RockFish, or enjoying the local lakes and rivers.

Violet, 11, is also developing her musical chops taking piano lessons with Grace, cello lessons with Griffon, and playing cello in the Whitefish Middle School Orchestra.



Outside of music, Violet is a Montana State champ gymnast and loves to ride her horse, Big Mac" every chance she gets. At home she can often be heard noodling on a ukulele in her room or the piano or cello in the basement. She loves to ski, climb, ice skate, and swim whenever she has the opportunity.

Sawyer, 8, has been exploring drums with Jeremy and piano with Grace at the music school. The sense of joy and accomplishment after each lesson is obvious. Like his brother and sister, Sawyer enjoys all of the outside and inside activities our community has to offer, skiing, ice skating, rock climbing, and swimming topping his list.



The North Valley Music School, for us, is among a handful of community resources that stand out as being truly important for the wellness of our community and our family. The vibe there, created by the instructors and staff, is positive and energetic...and contagious. Good things are happening at North Valley Music School.





Donor Spotlight

The Legacy of Music and Love

The Blake Reese Scholarship Fund

Every year, the North Valley Music School is profoundly moved by the dedication of Nancy and Jesse Thompson, who ensure the power of music remains accessible to local students through the Blake Reese Scholarship Fund. Their annual gift honors the memory of their beloved son, Blake, whose vibrant spirit continues to resonate deeply within our community.

The Thompsons' story is intertwined with this valley. Nancy reflects on what brought them here, sharing simply, "Blake was the reason we came to this beautiful place." This profound connection to the valley and to their son is the root of a fund that now helps young musicians discover their own creative voices.

When asked to summarize Blake's legacy, Nancy shared that the task felt "too emotional to consider writing a passage in his memory." Instead, they rely on the perfect words offered by a dear friend of Blake's after his death:

People affect the world in different ways, leave behind trails of actions and words, sometimes music. That I know better now how to love, how to laugh and how to sing, I owe to Blake Reese. That I am more accepting of differences, more dedicated to the earth and to helping people take care of it, more open to adventure and to taking it easy, I owe to him too. Blake brought music into peoples' lives; to mentor so many musicians, support their original playing and writing, is huge, right? It is an enormous and lasting gift, one he gave generously and without ceremony. The world and the way we see it has been changed for the better because of Blake's presence in our lives. I am forever grateful.

The Blake Reese Scholarship Fund ensures that the beauty and joy Blake brought into the world continues to be felt in our school every day. Each year, these scholarships support many students who rely on music as a form of therapy, finding in their instruments the discipline and emotional outlet that transforms their lives. By supporting a student's musical journey, Nancy and Jesse are transforming personal sorrow into lasting opportunity.

NVMS is forever grateful to the Thompson family for choosing to honor Blake's memory by making music possible for the next generation of Flathead Valley artists. In Nancy's own words, "This is how we can honor Blake's life, through music."





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