

THE SKANNER

CHALLENGING PEOPLE TO SHAPE A BETTER FUTURE NOW

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ETHOS is Hip to the Music Education Scene

Based in its new smoke and alcohol-free club at 2 N. Killingsworth St., ETHOS Inc. offers its new season of affordable music classes at locations throughout North and Northeast Portland for kids aged kindergarten through high school. From classical to hip-hop, from violin to electric guitar, the nonprofit community music center lists more than 40 classes that start Jan. 8. The one-hour sessions are spread over eight weeks. Registration ends Dec. 15, and no serious student is turned

away for inability to pay. Although many gifted artists teach at ETHOS, the men behind local hip-hop recording label 605 Inc. are stars of the winter lineup. Boasting radio DJ Synaca Hall, rapper Charles Golden Jr., multi-talented artist Laeon Carter III and others, 605 Inc. has strong ties to Portland YouthBuilders and many community organizations. "They came to us, saw we were a music center, and asked if they could perform here," said ETHOS director Charles Lewis.

"Then they did school assemblies with us — the kids went wild." As a result, Hip-Hop Fundamentals for second- to fifth-graders is scheduled Wednesday afternoons from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m., and for sixth- through 12th-graders also on Wednesdays from 4:30 to 5:30 p.m. Also look for more traditional piano, violin, cello, guitar, bass guitar, saxophone, clarinet, flute, trumpet and voice classes.

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World Rhythms, Making Music with Family, Recording Fundamentals, Rock Band and Band Class are scheduled as well.

Band instruments can be checked out free of charge. In addition to classes at the ETHOS club, Moore Street Salvation Army Community Center and University of Portland, the organization also gives free music assemblies at local schools.

The point of the program is filling the void of music classes once offered at all public schools. "I think the need is incredible," Lewis said. "Portland Public Schools estimate there are only two teachers for every thousand kids in the areas of music and art combined."

Lewis got the idea for ETHOS while a graduate student at Harvard University. His college internship with a nonprofit community group involved creating an educational outreach program. Earlier he'd served as a Peace Corps volunteer in the Congo, which made him decide public service is his life's calling.

On graduation in 1998, Lewis moved to Portland



From left, Dan Binmore, of the multicultural and musical educational program ETHOS, and John Ball Elementary School students Dominic Luster, Shekisha Dykstra and Laguisha Waters pounds the drums during a school assembly.

and pieced together ETHOS with the help of community grants and volunteers.

ETHOS has finally reached "critical mass," Lewis said. It is self-supporting. Friday and Saturday performances at their little music club raise the cash that is then put back into scholarships for local kids.

The program now has four full-time staff, and dozens of volunteers. Aside from 605 Inc., other teachers include jazz drummer John Lamb and African drummer Johnny Calvert. Michelle Anderson, the lead singer for nationally renowned rock band Jesus Presley, teaches choir.



From left, third-grader Ryan Elliott enjoys strumming on a guitar with Dave Thompson, a member of the multicultural and musical educational program ETHOS.

They started last year with 10 kids in a piano class, but now, word is out — 350 kids enrolled in their most recent

session. "With all the spring break camps and the lessons, we've probably had a thousand kids come through this

year," Lewis said.

The group tries to tailor programs to community need. Working with the Da Da Kidogo program at Legacy Emanuel Hospital, ETHOS teachers presented a music appreciation class tracing the African roots of jazz and rap.

"We outfitted the whole band at Woodmere Elementary School and then set them up with an instructor," Lewis said. "Now they have a school band where before they had nothing."

Last summer ETHOS volunteers even wrote a special song for a patient at Doernbecher Hospital. Because he was in an isolation unit, the boy couldn't come down to hear the ETHOS artists who were in the hospital for a special performance. The tune, called "Little Child," was recorded on a CD and played in the sterile medical unit that housed the terminally ill boy — Trent Sims.

For more information or to make an instrument donation, call ETHOS Inc. at 503-241-8824. Their complete winter schedule is posted on a web site, www.ethos-inc.com.