

# Program uses stars, music to motivate youth

By Parker Philpot  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

A group of local children was treated to an afternoon session with members of the popular R&B group Frankie Beverly and Maze through The Music Exchange, a local program geared to do much more than entertain children.

"Our main goal — and our love — is to get our children where they can make proper choices," said Oliver Garner, founder and CEO of the program.

The session took place recently at the Nevada Children's Center at 5615 S. Eastern. As an after-school facility set in a supportive environment for children of all ages with special needs, it offers encouraging activities for those with mental health issues, emotional problems and other challenges that often result in behavioral or learning difficulties. Many children who get involved in Garner's music program have troubles that resulted from broken or low-level functioning families.

"We have to make adjustments for what the parents aren't doing," Garner stated.

The Music Exchange has operated for about six years and travels to different school campuses and recreational facilities in Clark County in its mission to empower children through music. And even more important, Garner says, the music program gives children something beyond a fun activity. He says there is clear evidence that music — the mathematical aspect of it and the type of organized thinking it requires — helps children with comprehension of numbers and improved decision-making skills through logic.

Garner enlisted the experienced musicians, as well as other instructors who helped, to speak with the children to show that music offers an alternative to unproductive or trouble-causing activities and is a good route to college scholarships.

"It's easier to get a music scholarship than an athletic scholarship," Garner said.

One of the school's visiting band members, singer and bass player Larry Kimpel, after spending time with about 40 children who participated in the session, shared with the *Sentinel-Voice* more about his personal story of how early exposure to music kept him in-



Larry Kimpel, right, of Frankie Beverly and Maze recently talked with children as part of the Music Exchange, a local program that focuses on empowering youth through music.

involved and out of trouble in his hometown Chicago.

"It gave me a greater sense of myself. It gave me pride... that I could do something, and I could do it well. I didn't have to hustle. I could make money at it. It gave me a good grounding to start my life on," Kimpel stated.

"I got the inspiration around four years old or so," he said, adding that his early drive was the result of a musician he encountered at school in his early childhood.

"I had a piano in the house... I started banging on the piano when I walked past it," he said. Since his sister had less interest than he did, he recounted that his relatives said, "'Well heck, let's just give him the lessons.' ... At about age 12, I went into playing bass guitar."

Kimpel, 48, had a steady track to his more than 30-year music career. The most rewarding thing about his profession, Kimpel said, "is when people come up to you or they email you and they tell you how you inspired them or helped them get through something difficult in their life. Music ministers to someone, helps them."

He encouraged the young students to stay on course: "Keep it up. It's a beautiful thing. You cannot go wrong with music. It's needed in this world. It's going to be a very

important part of your life. Stick with it."

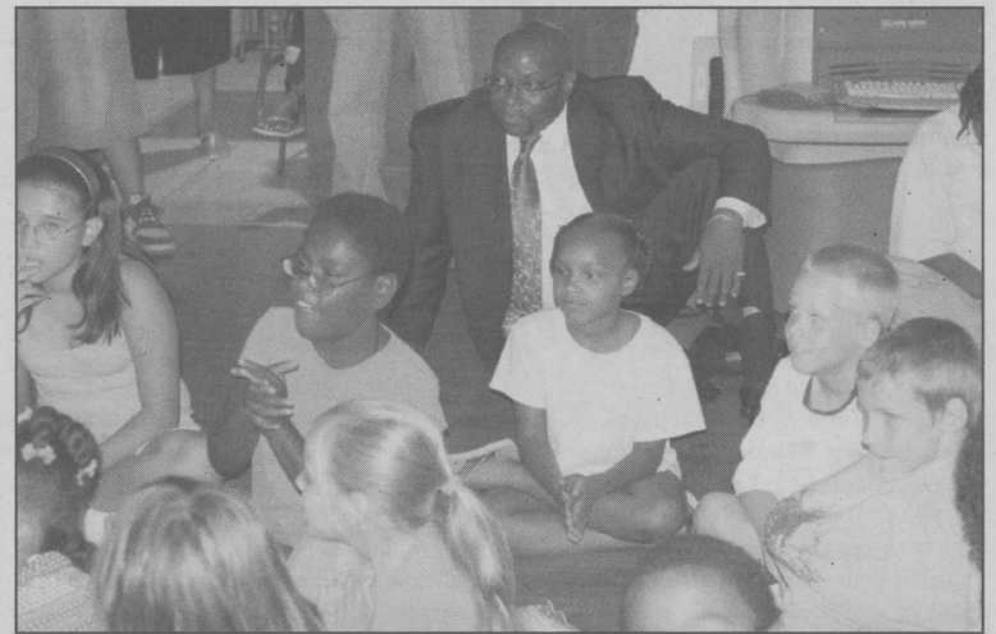
Another instructor, Bobby Barnes, said he joined Garner's program because he had worked with children in his own youth program before relocating to Las Vegas about five years ago, and he knows the positive difference it makes for so many of them.

Both Barnes and Garner emphasize that when children "put down the gangs and drugs" and pick up instruments instead, they have a better future and one that helps them on many levels.

The program accepts donations of various musical instruments from its community partners, such as the House of Blues, and any it receives from individual contributors.

"Over the last few years, we have given away over 100

guitars," Garner said, and quickly added, "We can always use instruments."



Oliver Garner, founder and CEO of the Music Exchange program, listens intently to the message of their guest speakers from the R&B group Frankie Beverly and Maze. The six-year-old program travels the city spreading the message of math and music's power.

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filed an appeal with the Michigan Court of Appeals. It was not known when the appeals court would act.

By afternoon it was clear that the ban on out-of-state travel remains as part of the assault case.

"If someone wants to discuss changes to that, they're going to have to bring that up with us," Hills said.

Kilpatrick's lawyer, James Thomas, said high-ranking Democrats want the mayor to attend the convention. Obama spokesman Brent Colburn, however, said in an e-mail that the focus of the convention should be on Obama and not on what Colburn called "the troubles of one individual."

The program focuses on the individual student's self-esteem as well as their academic development through music, which Garner says also relates to numbers in the handling of scales, chords, octaves, movements, and notes — such as half, quarter, eighth and whole — along with how key transpositions are managed.

He gave examples of students who have used music training to make their other basic study skills better. One student had severe troubles with focusing before he started taking music and now has an amazing grasp of numbers using music as his frame of reference. Another student has become so adept at the mathematical components that he "figured out the note values" with amazing speed and ability for his age and experience, according to Garner. One student is the subject of an upcoming documentary because of his astonishing growth once he started music classes, according to Garner.

"The music helps them focus."

Garner expands the scope of The Music Exchange from teaching 7-year-olds through

the late teens by also inviting their parents and other responsible adults in their homes to take skills classes.

"We ask to get the parents involved. We require that they take a life-skill, leadership class," he continued, adding that he encourages the parents and even grandparents to learn more about music as their youngsters study.

"This is to balance out the community. It creates more harmonious relationships in the home," he added.

The nonprofit program operates with a small administrative staff and has about 10 instructors, many of whom come from local universities and directly from the neighborhoods where the students live. The program has operated on several sites, including Doolittle Community Center, Cashman and Bridger elementary schools; and even more are planned.

Garner is a graduate of the Chicago Conservatory of Music, and he works with the Clark County School District as a music instructor at Andre Agassi Academy and other campuses. For information or to participate, visit [TheMusicExchange.org](http://TheMusicExchange.org) or call (702) 301-7276.

Also Aug. 14, Gov. Jennifer Granholm's legal team said she has no authority to pardon Kilpatrick because he hasn't been convicted of a crime. One of his lawyers had raised that possibility in a letter to the governor.

The state constitution says the governor can grant a pardon in a criminal case only after a conviction.

Granholm plans to hold a Sept. 3 hearing to decide if she should remove Kilpatrick from office. Earlier, she addressed the matter following a speech in Traverse City.

"I've said all along this has got to be resolved," Granholm said. "This has been very, very difficult for the city and for the state, and it's obvious why we need a resolution."