Students perform during Books, Brushes & Bands for Education concert

BY SUE ELLEN ROSS
Post-Tribune

Musical concerts usually highlight a specific talent — orchestra, band or choir. The Books, Brushes & Bands for Education organization recently covered all three areas during its 15th annual Spring Concert in the Morton High School auditorium.

Seventy students from 20 nearby schools (including home-schooled) participated in the program, which was attended by more than 200 guests.

"I've never seen an organization like this one. They cover it all for the kids," said Janey Prentiss of Hammond, as she looked over the evening's agenda. "With so many of the schools cutting their art and music programs, this is a saving grace opportunity for many."

Parent Maria Orozco, of Hammond, agreed. Her daughter Victoria, 7, has been singing with the BBB4E Children's Choir for two years.

"Victoria always wanted to sing, and her school didn't offer anything for her," Orozco said. "We're glad we found this group, it's done a lot for her. She's much more confident now than when she first began."

Books, Brushes & Bands for Education was developed by Michelle Golden in 2000, with the mission of "offering students exposure, experience and exploration available through the literary, visual and musical art, which are essential to the potential of every child."

She added that the organization is not only a music school, "They are learning skills they will use well into their future."

Hammond resident Vanessa King, of Hammond, was in the audience for the concert, supporting her nephews in Beginning Band.

"It's great that someone cares about our kids' music education," she said. "What a positive spin to put on young people today — so many are hard workers looking to develop themselves in a positive way."

Indeed, many parents and grandparents echoed the same thoughts of watching the students grow in a myriad of ways while involved with BBB4E.

Michele and Tyrone Spann were among the proud parents sitting in the audience.

Their son Matthew, 7, joined BBB4E's Beginning Violin class last year.

"They (BBB4E teachers) are doing a wonderful job," Michele Spann said. "This is good exposure for those not familiar with instruments they want to learn. Matthew did not take violin lessons before coming here and he's doing great. He's thoroughly focused."

Her vision-come-to-life is a true community organization, according to Golden.

"For some, we provide the only access students have to instrumental music," she said. "With the continued investment of the community partners, donors and families, we are on the road to serving thousands more in the many years ahead."

Sue Ellen Ross is a freelance reporter for the Post-Tribune.

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