



Nutrition for the Mind and Soul



2015 Annual Report



PROUD MEMBER OF
United Way
United Way
of the National Capital Area
Member #9319

Music for Life, PO Box 1141, Springfield VA 22151
www.musicforlife.org

CFC
Combined Federal Campaign
Approved Charity
Member #40878

President's Message



Economic recovery is a topic of considerable discussion these days. While the US has fared better than most all other developed nations, the pace has been slower than in previous years. Opinions differ as to whether the situation is due to government policy, globalization, technology or some combination thereof. Regardless of the cause it continues to have an adverse effect on our society. The number of people requiring assistance continues to grow thus the strain on our safety net, whether government or nonprofit, continues to increase. More resources are required to help those in need; more prevention programs are needed to deal with the root causes.

Music for Life is a prevention program that serves low income middle and high school age youth. Prevention takes time and involves changing attitudes and behavior; it is difficult to show progress in tangible terms that are easily conveyed to those whose generosity makes our programs possible. Our success is measured by how many youth we helped remain, or get back on a positive track through high school graduation. We help youth who have been given a good start through early childhood education programs stay on the proper track as they progress through puberty and those difficult teen years. Young children rarely realize the economic and social challenges they'll face growing up in a low income family; that awareness develops during their middle and high school years. Without age appropriate programs to support them through this difficult phase of development much of what they gained in early childhood can be lost; they can be overwhelmed by their challenges, lose faith in their ability to overcome them, and end up perpetuating the circumstances into which they were born versus moving out of them.

In 2015 we initiated a Band & Orchestra Program. As an example of the issue discussed in the previous paragraph we found that a number of youth entering our guitar program preferred learning another instrument and wanted to go into their middle or high school band or orchestra programs. However, when they got to that level they found there were fees associated with participation. Government resources cover some fees but not all so many low income students could not participate. Our Band & Orchestra Program helps these students with any fees they cannot afford and we provide them supplemental lessons in any instrument as needed. Keeping with our tradition of collaboration versus duplication of effort we formed a partnership with Levine School of Music, MusicLink Foundation and Potomac Arts Academy to provide the lessons in those band and orchestra instruments.

Our 2015 revenue being down from prior years is not of concern; our base of individual support continued to grow. The decline is primarily due to the timing of grant awards. The opportunities available to us don't track well with our calendar year financials; every few years we have a declining year followed by an above average year. This last happened in 2012; revenue decline from 2011 but 2013 and 2014 revenue were well above 2011. All indications are that our 2016 revenue will exceed the \$81,113 reported in 2014. To protect against revenue swings we do maintain a two year operating reserve to insure that revenue fluctuations do not impact our ability to deliver our programs.

Music for Life values those who financially support us; it our foremost obligation to use their support wisely as part of a viable and lasting solution. We continually look for ways to improve the content of our program and the way in which it is delivered. We are also an outspoken advocate for putting more emphasis on solutions; i.e. prevention. Serving needs and finding solutions are separate issues that should not be confused; while both are necessary, programs providing services to a person in need are not the same as programs that prevent that person from needing those services. To this end we will continue to actively participate in open dialog about needs and solutions with government, the private sector, the nonprofit community, funders and the people we serve.

Shyly Charles

Year in Review



2015 was another banner year. The students served increased from 706 in 2014 to 802; our 2016 goal is 850. Our partnerships with other music organizations wherein we provide them equipment so they can accommodate low income students continued. We opened new class locations and held classes for underserved adults; we facilitated introduction to music events for the National Association of Music Merchants (NAMM), Family4Kids and BefriendAChild. We added the Amazing Slowdowner music app and Bose Bluetooth speakers to our teacher's kit so students could hear and play along with the songs they were learning. We initiated the Band & Orchestra Program.



Music for Life is committed to developing a quality music education program. The benefits include improving student's academic performance and social skills as well as helping students become more responsible, disciplined and confident. Music education differs from learning to play an instrument in that it includes learning to read music and basic music theory. While learning to play an instrument has value, the studies proving the aforementioned benefits are all based on students engaged in a music education program for one or more years. Our curriculum includes all the elements of a music education program and we are continually enhancing our classroom experience to keep students enrolled longer. Many of our students now stay with our program two or more years.



Our strength, the reason for our success, is the commitment and dedication of our volunteers. They provided more than 3,000 hours of classroom instruction in 2015. When I sit in on classes I'm impressed with their skill and inspired by their compassion for the students. It's a reminder of how a small, weekly investment of one's time can make a significant difference in the life of those less fortunate.



Engaging the nonprofit community and developing relationships with professional organizations in the field are also essential aspects of our success. Through our memberships in United Way, the Center for Nonprofit Development and county volunteer organizations we stay current on regional needs; gain valuable training on best practices; build relationships with partnering organizations; and find volunteers and sponsors. Through our relationships with national/international organizations like NAMM, GAMA and the National Association for Music Educators (NAfME) we have access to their membership's expertise and support which we use to improve our curriculum and grow our program.



2016 and beyond will be challenging but we're prepared. Government budgets will remain stressed which means some school programs will be eliminated, scaled back or require fees; all factors which disproportionately impact those at the lower end of the economic spectrum. The continued slow pace of the economic recovery means the need for nonprofit services will continue to grow faster than the funds available from Government, business and individuals. That means we'll have to work smarter, be more efficient and gain maximum leverage from all our assets. We successfully navigated this environment for the past few year; we're committed to continuing that success.





Providing Opportunity

Who we are

Music for Life serves Washington DC and the neighboring counties in Virginia and Maryland. We provide music education and mentoring program for youth living under adverse circumstances - poverty, dysfunctional families and challenged neighborhoods. Studies show that those with limited means are less likely to succeed; they have fewer opportunities; family and friends have limited ability to support them. Yet the fastest growing segment of our population is youth in poverty; the school dropout rate for these youth, particularly minorities is high. We believe every child should have equal opportunity to succeed; we help them by leveling the playing field.

What we do

Music for Life goes into the communities where at-risk youth reside and sets up free music education programs. Music is particularly effective in our diverse society because it appeals to youth of any age, gender, race, religion or cultural background; there are no stereotypes associated with who can learn to play. Research shows a strong correlation between music education and a person's success in life. Those involved in quality programs tend to do better in school; score higher on standardized tests; be less inclined to engage in risky behavior; and be more socially adept. Learning music is also a release for stressful emotions that can't otherwise be expressed. We also provide career and life mentoring by giving them access to experienced, successful adults who can share their perspective.



Understanding the benefits of a music program



Kids with nowhere to go, end up ... going nowhere

Why it's important

Youth born into poverty or with limited opportunities are affected both physically and mentally. Without intervention today these youth will become society's burden tomorrow. Our music education programs teach discipline, build self esteem, develop self confidence and social skills. Our mentors provide these youth the skills and guidance necessary to overcome the limitations inherent to the environment into which they were born and become successful in life.

We are community based; bringing quality programs into the communities where our student's reside is the most effective way to improve the community and reduce risky behavior. We provide students, their family and friends something tangible in their community around which they can develop a sense of pride and ownership.

Building confidence, self esteem and social skills in the youth we serve is a major goal of our program. Research has shown that youth who feel good about themselves and experience success are much more likely to avoid risky behavior, stay in school, make good decisions and succeed in life.



Building Confidence

Our students learn the discipline required to play an instrument; they're taught basic guitar skills, basic music theory and how to read music; they experience positive relationship/role-modeling with adults and older youth. These are disciplines and interpersonal experiences common to any academic or career path one may choose. These positive experiences improve their academic performance; inspire them to engage in the opportunities available to them; and removes those barriers that lead them toward participating in risky behaviors.



Developing Understanding

Sustained participation in our program strengthens our student's relationships with other youth, especially those from different ethnic, social or racial backgrounds. Music is enjoyed by everyone and can be performed by anyone regardless of their gender, race, religion, national origin, intellectual accomplishments or physical size. With music serving as the common interest that brought them together, our students engage one another; they learn more about what they have in common; and they gain understanding of their differences.



Improving Academics

Parents and teachers tell us that their child's/student's academic performance has improved as a result of their participation in our program. While music is an art form it is also mathematically based and thus also exercises the part of the brain that is used for math and science; it truly is nutrition for the mind. When children are able to indulge their passion, in our case music, it lifts their spirits and makes it easier for them to focus on other tasks which are important but perhaps less interesting to them.

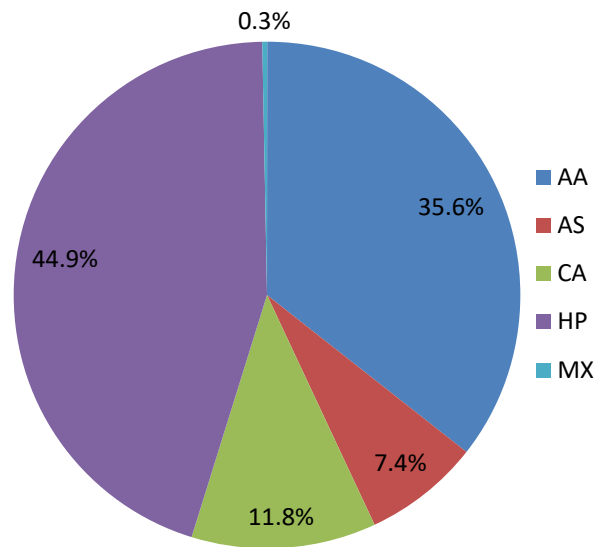
We began volunteering with after school music programs in the metropolitan Washington DC area in 2006; the number served has grown substantially each year since. We incorporated in 2010 and became Music for Life in 2013. We strive to improve ourselves each year and are most proud of the results we're achieving.

Assimilating the diversity in our society is a major challenge and one of the goals of our program. Music embraces our diversity; its appeal easily crosses gender, age, race, national origin, religion and physical attributes boundaries. Our program is attracting that diversity and our students are developing important social skills as they learn together in our classrooms.

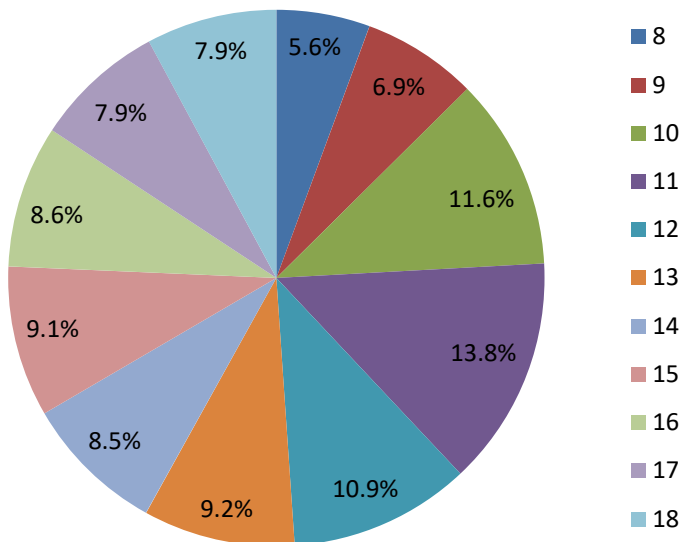
Our racial diversity reflects the low income population distribution in the communities we serve. The percentage of Hispanic youth served continues to increase.

Our age diversity is approximately a 40/60 split between middle and high school age students. The percentage of high school youth served continues to increase.

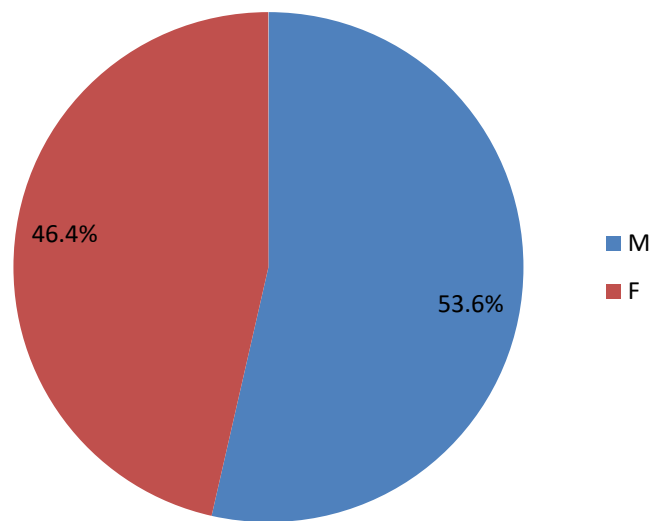
Our gender diversity is slightly more males than females.



Racial Diversity



Age Diversity



Gender Diversity

Overview

Prior year financial data, audit reports and Annual Reports are posted on our website. Annual audits are usually completed by September of the following year.

Following is a summary of our recent financial performance.

	<u>Revenue</u>	<u>Expenses</u>
2010	\$44,426	\$17,329
2011	\$47,871	\$25,468
2012	\$33,026	\$22,024
2013	\$63,529	\$37,665
2014	\$81,113	\$27,340
2015	\$37,923	\$23,390

Revenue & Expense Notes

Revenue decline due to absence of one time 2014 matching funds of \$12,700 and no new grant awards.

Expenses for guitars & accessories down due to greater retention of 2014 students and fewer new students added.

Expenses for training & teaching supplies up due to addition of music app and Bose speakers.

Our overhead dollar expenses are low relative to many nonprofits; percentages appear high due to the relatively small expense base in small nonprofits.

Music for Life Officers & Board

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Frank Darling
Diane Ditzler
Irvin Kalugdan
Glen McCarthy
Dixie Mitchell

Balance Sheet

As of December 31, 2015

Unaudited

Cash	
Unrestricted	\$157,989
Temporarily Restricted	\$ 0
Pledges Receivable	\$ 0
Grants Receivable	\$ 0
Inventories for Sale	\$ 7,064
Inventories for Use	\$ 40,444
Total Assets	\$205,497
Total Liabilities	\$ 7,032
Net Assets	\$198,465

Revenues & Expenses

Period ended December 31, 2015

Unaudited

Revenues:

Contributions	\$18,523
Grants	\$ 0
Product Sales	\$ 2,156
Raffles	\$ 785
Federated Campaigns	\$11,659
In-Kind Donations	\$ 4,800

Total Revenues \$37,923

Expenses:

Guitars & Accessories	\$ 7,427
Training & Teaching Supplies	\$ 1,310
Fed & State Fees	\$ 202
Professional Fees	\$ 9,941
Teacher Insurance	\$ 2,340
Information Technology	\$ 428
Advertising & Promotion	\$ 1,629
Office Supplies	\$ 113

Total Expenses \$23,390

Change in Net Assets \$14,533

Income Uses

Program	\$18,947	81.0%	
Administration	\$ 2,614	11.2%	\$2,160 for annual audit
Fundraising	\$ 1,829	7.8%	\$1,068 for online services

To ensure long term sustainability Music for Life retains a two year operating expense reserve as a hedge against economic uncertainty.