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DR THE Daily Record

Kids involved at Boys' Village music therapy program really thrive

By Linda Hall Staff Writer

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WOOSTER -- When the youth at Boys' Village sing, learn how to play an instrument, or just jam together in the evening outside the realm of school or required therapy, they're part of a greater lesson than musical skills and appreciation.

"I work on a lot of expression, socialization and working together," said Ryan Adamov, music therapist for The Village Network's Boys' Village campus. "They're (also) learning how to be responsible ... take ownership," based on all aspects of musicality and even care of the instruments.

"Ownership and responsibility are big things," Adamov said, noting how "(we) teach life skills through music."

Students are more motivated to work through their problems using the outlet of music.

"It's another positive way to express feelings," Deb Jenkins, TVN marketing director, pointed out.

"It's key to use music they like," Adamov said.

"It's got to be appropriate and filtered," clarified John Guenther, who is the vocational therapist but also leads the boys' choir.

While the boys have input into the music they perform, "I do choose about half the music as well," Adamov said, giving an example of working together on a choice. "I have one kid who is interested in Beethoven. I start with their interest and go from there."

The youth are involved in the gamut of musical opportunities.

"I do teach instruments -- guitar and piano," Adamov said, "and we're working on voice."

"I (also) teach music production," he said, involving students from "a concept all the way to putting it on a CD."

"We're going to (start on) Christmas music," Guenther said, along with having a talent show Nov. 29.

"Ryan and I collaborate on the choir, which is always fun," Guenther said.

In the rock band, "I have a drum set, electrical guitar, electrical bass and a singer," Adamov said. "It's a mix between my own stuff and instruments the Village has provided."

Most of the time spent with that group is "teaching them how to play together. The ones who have the most experience, I expect to be leaders."

Guenther has his own story of leadership, having been tapped to lead the choir as soon as he got to the campus.

"I fell into the role (and) it was a great fit," he said.

One of the finer moments of heading the choir was allowing the boys to mastermind the choir program for the The Village Network's annual celebration.

"It flowed really nicely," he said.

"I'm really excited Ryan," who is a certified music therapist, "came on board."

Adamov, in turn, praised the staff members who assist him.

"The kids who have been involved (in music programs) have really thrived," Guenther said.

"They're going to find something (they like)," Adamov said.

Music has always been a part of the curriculum, Jenkins said, but options, such as a rock music band, are now more plentiful.

Jenkins said boys in the residential program must take music therapy, but evening groups in which they may participate are optional, drawing about 40 young people on a regular basis.

Adamov runs evidence-based music therapy, Jenkins said.

“Music therapy is not about skill and talent,” she said. “It requires more from an individual, such as concentration, memorization, collaboration, teamwork and commitment.”

“It also provides pride in accomplishment,” she said.

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