

Summer 2008

Mayo Alumni



Music-loving physician gets band instruments for schools

When Rich Kirkpatrick, M.D., was 10 years old, his heart was set on playing the trumpet. His father and the school band director decided otherwise, and Kirkpatrick played clarinet instead. He never forgot that experience, and he is determined that children in the Longview, Wash., area get to play their instrument of choice. In the last four years, he has spent \$45,000 to purchase and donate more than 400 used instruments to middle school band programs. He received the Washington Music Educators Association Friend of Music Award for his efforts.

"I've tried to help kids have the opportunity to play in a school band and learn the instrument of their choosing, rather than having one selected by parents — often based on the availability of some relative's old horn," says Dr. Kirkpatrick. "For the price of one new \$2,000 name-brand trumpet, I can buy 40 used horns and give many more children an opportunity to try their hand at music."

"A child psychologist once told me that if a middle school child is good at something — anything — he or she will avoid the life-altering bad choices that are epidemic in middle schools. Sports are often heavily funded by schools and communities, while music is often largely neglected in school budgets."



Rich Kirkpatrick, M.D.

Dr. Kirkpatrick's informal music donation program began when the band director at his son's middle school mentioned that more children would be in band and more would opt to play trumpet if they had the instruments. Dr. Kirkpatrick went shopping on eBay and bought 10 used trumpets for the school. Then the band director mentioned that even more kids wanted to play trumpet in the band, so Dr. Kirkpatrick returned to eBay. Next, the band director mentioned that the school had only one trombone. Dr. Kirkpatrick donated seven more. Then came baritones, tubas, snare drums, saxophones and a xylophone.

"Initially, I stayed up at night going through thousands of instrument listings on eBay," says Dr. Kirkpatrick. "Some eBay sellers inquired why I was bidding on multiple instruments. When I explained, they gave me good prices and discounts. People who learned why I was doing this were very eager to help. Everybody seems to recognize that middle school students need all the help they can get."

Dr. Kirkpatrick was referred to ShopGoodwill, a national Web site for Goodwill Industries and another source for used instruments. Another referral led him to a retired local band director with National Music Technician certification. He agreed to fix clarinets and flutes for free. A trumpet-playing pharmaceutical rep told Dr. Kirkpatrick about a repair technician who would repair brass instruments and saxophones at discounted prices. Dr. Kirkpatrick also organized an instrument repair workshop for music teachers so they could make minor repairs at no cost to their department budgets.

"Because the instruments I purchase are used, many are in need of repair or adjustment. Those costs can wipe out a school's entire music budget," says Dr. Kirkpatrick. "With help from these repair people, I've been able to get what turns out to be — after repairs — the equivalent of a \$400 clarinet, \$500 trumpet or \$800 saxophone for a fraction of the cost."

When a new middle school in the area opened with a \$500 annual budget for the band program, its band director requested help. Dr. Kirkpatrick secured 15 clarinets, 10 flutes, trumpets and trombones. A third middle school band director called with the news that only 20 sixth grade students at his school had joined band because other families couldn't afford instrument rental. Dr. Kirkpatrick bought flutes, clarinets, trumpets, slide trombones, valve trombones, baritones, French horns, percussion instruments and tubas.

"I made a commitment that day that any child in our area who wanted to play an instrument would have one available through school," says Dr. Kirkpatrick. "When I was growing up in Washington, the local music store logo was 'Music brings happiness.' Many young people

*"Music has charms to soothe
the savage breast
To soften rocks, or bend
a knotted oak."*

William Congreve
The Mourning Bride, Act 1 Scene 1
English dramatist (1670 - 1729)



Dr. Rich Kirkpatrick's love for music has led him to donate hundreds of used musical instruments to middle schools in the Longview, Wash., area. His clinic, Kirkpatrick Family Care, also sponsors Summer Concerts at the Lake, a series of seven free events attended by thousands.

find music to be a good way to express themselves and relieve frustrations.”

Dr. Kirkpatrick could be referring to his own experience. He played clarinet and alto saxophone through college at the University of Washington in Seattle. His playing was curtailed while in medical school, and during residency (Internal Medicine, 1976) at Mayo Clinic. After he settled into practice in Washington, he joined the Lower Columbia College Symphonic Band and, later, the Columbian

Choral Ensemble. He founded the Lower Columbia Clarinet Guild and Lower Columbia Trumpet Guild, and helped start the Southwest Washington Youth Symphony. He is a founding member and board president of the Columbia River Chamber Orchestra. Last summer in a benefit concert, he played clarinet in a duet with a principal soprano of the Salzburg Cathedral in Austria.

His father, Neal Kirkpatrick, M.D. (Mayo School of Graduate Medical

Education, Internal Medicine, 1949), retired from practice last summer at age 88. The elder Dr. Kirkpatrick plays flute and piccolo in chamber ensembles, the Southwest Washington Symphony and the Lower Columbia College Symphonic Band.

“We’re a musical and medical family,” says the younger Dr. Kirkpatrick. “Fifteen of my cousins are either physicians or dentists. My brother, John Kirkpatrick,

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M.D., (Mayo School of Graduate Medical Education, Internal Medicine, 1976), an internist in Seattle, plays French horn. My father majored in music before switching to biology and going to medical school. When he was a resident at Mayo, he played flute for the Ice Follies and other road shows when they came to Minneapolis. My mother had a degree in music from the University of Wisconsin–Madison, and one of my sisters graduated from Oberlin Conservatory.

"My son, Jim, a cardiology professor at the University of Pennsylvania and former visiting medical student clerk at Mayo Clinic, plays trombone, trumpet and baritone. My other adult children, Ron, Dave and Mary, play brass instruments, and Dave is a composer and Christian recording artist. My wife, Susie, majored in music in college and sings at weddings and at church. And, to bring things full circle, I now — finally — take trumpet lessons with my two teenage children, Christie and Scotty."

Recently, Dr. Kirkpatrick has purchased some stringed instruments for local middle schools, and donated 40 guitars to the local YMCA and the Longview Park and Recreation Department for summer classes for kids.

Band enrollment in area middle schools has soared.

"Monticello Middle School has received more than 80 instruments from Dr. Kirkpatrick in the last three years," says Connie Noakes, director of bands and choirs at the school. "Three years ago, we had only 10 students in advanced band. Now, we have 40 students in advanced band and 40 in beginning band. For the upcoming school year, we anticipate 60 students in advanced band and 75 students in beginning band. Without his help, most of my students would not be able to play. We are able to

accommodate increasing numbers of students because they can borrow instruments."

"Previously, band directors told me stories about students crying when there were no available band instruments, begging for a chance to play a particular horn, and sitting in band class hoping that someone would drop out and an instrument would become available," says Dr. Kirkpatrick. "Now I get to hear stories about kids who — out of nowhere — show exceptional musical talent for an instrument they chose to play. Many kids otherwise would have had to sing in the school choir when their dream was to play trumpet or flute. I hope that in some small way, their middle school life is happier. Supporting music programs just feels like the right thing to do."

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and the principal interface between NASA headquarters and the broader scientific community.

Dr. Córdova's scientific career contributions have been in the areas of observational and experimental astrophysics, multispectral research on X-ray and gamma ray sources, and spaceborne instrumentation. She won NASA's highest honor, the Distinguished Service Medal, and was recognized as a 2000 Kilby Laureate for "contributions to society through science, technology, innovation, invention and education."

Nominate, *continued from page 38*

Consider nominating individuals who meet one or more of these qualities for the Mayo Clinic Alumni Association Professional Achievement Award or Humanitarian Award.

The Professional Achievement Award acknowledges significant contributions by an alumnus or alumna from Mayo School of Graduate Medical Education, Mayo Graduate School or Mayo Medical School. Accomplishments may be in a clinical program, research program or administrative field and must be exceptional in nature. The recipient will demonstrate the commitment of the Mayo brothers to practice, education and research.

The Humanitarian Award acknowledges significant contributions by an alumnus or alumna of Mayo's education programs to the welfare of a community, country or humanity, beyond any volunteer service to Mayo. The recipient will demonstrate the commitment of the Mayo brothers to service of humanity.

Information and nomination forms are available • At www.mayo.edu/alumni/awards.html • By calling the Alumni Association office, 507-266-4197 • In the next issue of *Mayo Alumni*.

Nominations due March 2, 2009