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Afternoon Tunes students, mentors set for recital May 23 at All Saints Church

Friday afternoons at All Saints Church in Worcester have become a tuneful time.

"Afternoon Tunes" is an initiative of All Saints, in partnership with the Pakachoag Music School of Greater Worcester, that offers children free after school music education and mentorship every Friday at the church during the school year, said program manager Cecile Afable. The 40 to 50 children taking part, who range in age from 5 or 6 years old to middle school, are mostly taught by 19 volunteer high school students, including several from Bancroft School, Holy Name High School, Oxford High School, Notre Dame Academy, Shrewsbury High School, St. John's High School, Wachusett Regional High School, Worcester Academy and Worcester Technical High School.

The Afternoon Tunes children and their high school mentors will combine to give a free recital at All Saints, 10 Irving St., at 11:30 a.m. May 23. "I'm really excited to hear them this weekend," said Afable, herself a volunteer and a student at Brandeis University. College student teachers have also come from Anna Maria College and Worcester Polytechnic Institute and other schools.

Afable said that a student who started out on guitar with Afternoon Tunes in 2009 and has now returned as a teacher while still in high school will perform at the May 23 recital. The performances of the mentors will show "if you're committed you can get to a high level," she said. Meanwhile, some young children who didn't know how to read music last September "will be able to play a simple song this weekend."

All Saints is located downtown and has had a long commitment to working in the community and music (the All Saints Choir of Men and Boys was founded in 1868). The Afternoon Tunes program was founded by Elizabeth Butterfield in 2009 and began with 20 children. It now has about 30 taking private instrument lessons (on piano, violin, saxophone, guitar, flute and drums) and another 20 in recorder classes, Afable said.

Afternoon Tunes also has an instrument loan program in conjunction with music stores such as Union Music of Worcester, David French Music and Robinson



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Music of Westboro, and donations from individuals.

"We loan them out every fall and collect them every spring," Afile said.

The only paid position in the program is a teacher supervisor, currently Nike Beaudry, a professional clarinetist on the faculty at Pakachoag Music School, Anna Maria College and Venerini Academy.

People giving back is another refrain of Afternoon Tunes.

Afile moved to Sturbridge from New York state with her parents and graduated from Tantasqua Regional High School. She was also a piano student at Pakachoag Music School and takes piano lessons at Brandeis where she is a gender studies major and plans to graduate in 2016. She said she read about Afternoon Tunes last year and contacted Butterfield, who was program manager at the time. Butterworth subsequently stepped down, and Afile took over.

"My ability to access music education is one of more important things in my life," Afile said. "I thought it was a wonderful opportunity to give something back to the community with what I consider important." Concerning the program this year, "I think it's been going great," she said.

Mentors have given testimonies of what the Afternoon Tunes experience has meant to them. Megan Li, a member of the Worcester Academy class of 2015 and a piano teacher and the program's instrument and supply manager, said "I know that when I am sitting next to a student at Afternoon Tunes, listening to their melodies and witnessing their improvement, I am in a place of complete bliss and contentment."

Olivia Del Brocco, a member of the Notre Dame Academy class of 2015 and a piano teacher with Afternoon Tunes said, "with an upcoming recital, I am becoming more anxious to see them perform. There is no better reward than to see the smile on their face when they master a hard line or to hear the satisfactory sigh when we finally get to the end of the piece."

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