

Thursday, January 22, 2015

JOMP raises funds for scholarships

By Richard Duckett TELEGRAM & GAZETTE STAFF

There's no place like home. Since Jan. 3, 2002, home for the Joy of Music Program has been 1 Gorham St., off Lincoln Street in Worcester. JOMP bought the building, a former nursing home, in December 2000 for \$600,000, with a \$50,000 down payment.

"Our necks were sticking out very far at that point," recalled Richard Ardizzone, associate director of the nonprofit community music school.

But at the 24th annual JOMPATHON at the school from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Jan. 24 the music may sound even a little more joyous than usual as over 250 students of all ages and levels play their favorite classical, jazz, folk and contemporary pieces in an all-day celebration of music to help raise money for the school's financial aid fund.

The school still has important financial goals it wants to meet, but since October JOMP's mortgage on 1 Gorham St. has been played out (or rather, paid out) to its finale.

"We just paid it off this fall," Ardizzone said.

It has been a good home. "When we saw this building we immediately knew it was going to work," said Wendy Ardizzone, who is married to Richard Ardizzone and is the director of JOMP. "It's been working very well for us — a community music school inside our building."

JOMP's origins go back to 1986, when Wendy Ardizzone began offering music and movement courses for preschoolers in rented space at First Unitarian Church, 90 Main St., Worcester. At the beginning of the first year she had 12 students; at the end there were 50.

Currently JOMP has more than 500 students, from pre-schoolers to senior citizens. The school soon knew it would need larger premises to accommodate its growth and preferably a space it could call its own. The Ardizzones looked at more than 50 buildings over the course of several years up to and including 2000. A fire in June 2000 at First Unitarian compounded the situation by causing a lot of damage. Wesley United Methodist Church



Matthew Toon, 15, of Sturbridge, practices on the trombone at the Joy of Music Program Music School. (T&G Staff/STEVE LANAVA)



Aria Kydd, 13, of Grafton, practices on the violin at the Joy of Music Program Music School. (T&G Staff/ STEVE LANAVA)



Wendy and Rich Ardizzone, of the Joy of Music Program, Worcester's Community Music School. (T&G Staff/STEVE LANAVA)

and United Congregational Church nearby made space available after the fire, but for 18 months JOMP had programs going on in three buildings.

Then came the move to 1 Gorham St.

"It was a huge risk. In order to ensure the school's survival we had to take that risk," said Wendy Ardizzone.

Having a home requires maintenance, upkeep, and unexpected expenses. In 2011, JOMP launched a fundraising campaign with three major objectives. The first was to fix the water drainage system that encircles the entire building and was collapsing, Wendy Ardizzone said. That project cost \$410,000 but was completed in the summer of 2013. "We were a construction site for three months," Richard Ardizzone said.

In 2011, the mortgage stood at \$280,000. Grants helped meet the second objective of paying it off. Now, JOMP wants to enlarge its recital hall, which can squeeze in about 100 people right now. The new hall would comfortably accommodate 200, Richard Ardizzone said. The estimated cost is \$700,000. JOMP puts on a number of student and faculty concerts during the year. The bigger concerts would still have to be at other venues, such as Mechanics Hall, since a hall at 1 Gorham St. that seated more than 200 would simply be too large for the building, Richard Ardizzone said.

"When that's done then we'll have a year of celebration," he said of meeting all the goals of the 2011 campaign.

Still, at JOMPATHON 2015 "we will call attention to it," he said of paying off the mortgage.

Mortgage payments annually had stood at \$33,000. Now that money can go into school programs, he said.

People and foundations/grants have clearly been very generous to JOMP over the years.

After the 2000 fire the school received a spurt of unsolicited donations, Richard Ardizzone said. "People just sent us money, and man did that help."

For its part, JOMP is trying to meet to meet financial aid need among students this year by providing \$140,000 in scholarships. The goal of JOMPATHON 2015 is to raise \$10,000 for the fund. Families are applying who never sought financial aid before, while others have been on waiting lists, Wendy Ardizzone said. "The need is really increasing."

Students have been raising pledges from friends and family for their performances at JOMPATHON 2015. The public is invited to drop in anytime during the day. Admission is free. Donations are appreciated but not required.



Kalley Hou, 12, of Holden, practices on her flute, under the watchful eye of the Joy of Music Program's flute & cello instructor, Tim Ter-ranella. (T&G Staff/STEVE LANAVA)



Gabriel Ferullo, 9, of Boylston, practices on the guitar as the Joy of Music Program's guitar in-structor, Joe D'Angelo, watches. (T&G Staff/STEVE LANAVA)

JOMPATHON 2015 is being dedicated to the memory of well-known Worcester musician Jim Allard, a JOMP faculty member (who also taught at Worcester Academy) who died last year.

"He (Allard) epitomized the spirit of JOMPATHON," Wendy Ardizzone said. "He would spend five or six hours not only with his own students but cheering on other students."

Meanwhile, she said there is a great deal of excitement among students, faculty and staff leading up to this JOMPATHON 2015.

"Kids signing up, polishing their pieces — there's a palpable energy in the air that's delightful," she said of the atmosphere at home.