

School bands short \$60,000



DAVID SOKOL/Staff photos
Gloucester elementary school band coordinator Jamie Klopotski holds up a microphone as, from left, Evalyn Copp, Minna Plaisted and Madelyn Timmons perform during a presentation of a \$10,000 donation to Gloucester's Grades 4-8 band programs by Music Drives Us at O'Maley Innovation Middle School for Monday.



Francesca Goddess performs on the clarinet as she leads the band after a presentation by Music Drives Us of a \$10,000 donation to Gloucester's Grades 4-8 band programs on Monday.

How to help

If you like to help keep Gloucester's school bands performing, donations may be to the Gloucester Education Foundation: Online at thinkthebest.org/donate. Under "special instructions" write "band."

By check: Make out to Gloucester Education Foundation with "band" in the memo line, and mail to Gloucester Education Foundation, PO Box 1104, Gloucester, MA 01930.

Bianca Numerosi addresses guests during a presentation by Music Drives Us of a \$10,000 donation to Gloucester's Grades 4-8 band programs on Monday.



\$10K grant lifts music programs

By Times Staff

The music programs in Gloucester schools continue to grow, and were boosted Monday by a \$10,000 grant from Ernie Boch Jr.'s Music Drives Us Foundation, but about \$60,000 is still needed to fully fund them.

On Monday, the Gloucester Education Foundation and Gloucester Public Schools celebrated the grant at O'Maley Middle School with a check presentation and a performance from O'Maley student musicians.

This grant comes as a key moment for the band programs. Together, the elementary and middle school bands now serve over 200 students each year, with enrollment steadily climbing since the pandemic, according to the Gloucester Education Foundation.

However, funding gaps for the music programs remain. Gloucester Education Foundation said it has raised \$317,900 toward the band programs over the past four years, thanks to the generosity of the Gloucester community and by securing several grants, including this latest one from Music Drives Us.

"Music Drives Us is proud to invest in Gloucester's talented students and educators," said Boch, founder of Music Drives Us. "Access to music changes lives, and we're honored to support this program that is opening doors for so many young people."

But to fully support the program this school year, the Gloucester Education Foundation and Gloucester Public Schools are seeking additional donors and sponsors, with about \$60,000 left to raise. Strategies to meet this need include establishing a new elementary and middle school Band Booster Club, holding a benefit concert at The Cut this winter, and asking those who attend school concerts to donate.

In 2024-25, 115 elementary students participated in the schools' band programs and nearly 30 of them advanced to the middle school band this fall. At O'Maley, 97 students took part in daytime and after-school lessons last year, with 100% reaching performance proficiency.

"Our students are finding confidence, joy, and connection through music," said Carlos Menezes Jr., Middle

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DAVID SOKOL/Staff photos

Posing for a photo with a \$10,000 check are, from left, Gloucester O'Maley School Band and Chorus Director Carlos Menezes, Music Drives Us Program Coordinator Jacyn Tremblay and Gloucester Elementary School Band Coordinator Jamie Klopotoski during a presentation at O'Maley Innovation Middle School on Monday.



Music Drives Us Program Coordinator Jacyn Tremblay applauds after a performance by seventh- and eighth-grade band students at O'Maley Innovation Middle School during a presentation by Music Drives Us of a \$10,000 donation to Gloucester's Grades 4-8 band programs on Monday.

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School band director. "This funding allows us to focus on collaboration and performance, giving every child the chance to succeed."

Students performed in school concerts, city festivals, and packed houses at venues such as The Cut. Volunteer mentors from the middle and high school bands contributed over 500 hours of service, while high school musicians gained paid teaching experience, strengthening the pipeline of future music leaders, the Gloucester Education Foundation said.

"Music Drives Us has given us a powerful boost, and we're thrilled to celebrate this grant," said Emily Siegel, executive director of GEF. "But to keep the momentum going, we need our whole community to step up. Every dollar we raise helps guarantee that any student in grades 4 to 8 that wants to participate in band can, at no cost to their family."

