

Donation Enhances Music Program

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MILLSBORO -- Sussex Central High School students can now learn to read music and play the piano with digital instruction.

Thanks to a Carl M. Freeman Foundation grant, school administrators have enhanced the facility's music department with the purchase of seven new keyboards.

"This is another tool that music teachers can use to help students realize their musical talents," Indian River spokesman Dave Maull said. "The new equipment will also help increase student participation in the school's blossoming music program. The school and district are extremely grateful to the (Carl M. Freeman) Foundation for its support of this worthwhile project."

Instructor Marla Mooney said although SCHS has the Center for Visual and Performing Arts, they lacked equipment to offer elective courses to the general school population. In Delaware, students must complete three courses in their pathway elective. Music pathway students haven't had many choices of classes, she noted, so this made her think of ways they might be able to obtain this equipment.

"I was thinking last year when I saw my students making wonderful progress on keyboards that the school really would benefit from having updated equipment where a whole classroom of students could learn to read and play music," she said.

Mooney and Maull first wrote a grant for a 10-piano lab with teacher controller module. When they were not selected, they kept looking around for other opportunities. Last spring, the Carl M. Freeman Foundation's Freeman Assists Communities with Extra Support grant was advertised. They decided to modify their original request to conform to the \$5,000 limit on the Freeman grant and submitted it. They were ultimately selected and the grant was written for seven Yamaha digital pianos. Funds raised by the Chorus Boosters were also used to purchase the equipment.

"(This) is a huge step forward for the Sussex Central High School music program," Maull said. Included in the grant were statements from parents indicating the need for such equipment. Greg Weidner, whose child attends SCHS, said he believes the grant is a step in the right direction.

"My daughter doesn't know how to read music and has never been extremely interested in (music)," he said. "But she's actually enjoying the lab experience. I think the technology behind this system can engage all students -- it meets the generation's level."

Mooney said the children have been enjoying the new equipment.

"We are now able to reach many more students with the opportunity to learn music -- a lesson for life," she said.

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