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news@murphymonitor.com



By **Jamie Engle**
Staff Writer
news@murphymonitor.com

Talent, timing and a bit of destiny converged. The result: an invitation for Strings of Color Orchestra to perform at the prestigious Oasis Jazz Awards in San Diego in March of 2011.

SOC is the first youth orchestra to play at the Oasis Jazz Awards. Three of the orchestra's members are from Murphy: Mari Fleming (violin), Maya Kirkland (violin) and Ari Mixon (violin).

"It is a wonderful opportunity, but the pressure of being the first is daunting; however, we are definitely up for the challenge," SOC Founder and Director Ron Planks said. "If this is a success, and we believe it will be, the Oasis Awards wants to put a process in place to audition and invite youth groups and/or individuals to participate every year.

"We feel extremely blessed that Jean Braxton (Robinson) and Bill Paddock are such visionaries and are willing to give us a chance. We want to perform well, but when our last note is played, it is just as important to us that the organizers feel we were a risk worth taking."

Planks originally contacted Robinson about booking Tom Braxton, a Dallas jazz musician, to play with SOC at their annual Black History concert in February 2011. Robinson asked his name and said she had gone to school with kids with the same last name. They discovered the students were Planks' uncle and his mother, for whom the Veta Louise Morriel Arts & Leadership Academy is named.

"This of course led to more conversation and revelations about her growing up in the house next door to my biological father. I must admit that I don't know my biological father very well, and it was so nice to hear stories of him growing up as boy and what he was like. It was a very cool conversation," Planks said.

Before the end of the conversation, Robinson requested a DVD of the orchestra, which she shared with Oasis Awards owner and producer Bill Paddock.

"At the beginning of the school year, Jean Braxton, Bill Paddock, myself and the Strings of Color board members were all on a conference call discussing the awards show. During that conversation, Bill was extremely complimentary about what he saw on the DVD, and he extended a formal invitation to Strings of Color to come and perform during the Awards weekend," Planks said.

The show takes place March 11-13, 2011, in San Diego. SOC will perform a matinee on Saturday, March 12, 2011, at the San Diego-Hard Rock Hotel in the Edge Ballroom. Hard Rock Hotel is the host hotel for the Awards weekend.

"In process of talking to Ron, I was so impressed with what he had done with the kids and Strings of Color Orchestra," Robinson said. "We've always had the idea of bringing Oasis Jazz in the Classroom to reach out to students and let them perform

Annual readers' poll returns

Friday, January 14, 2011

Social networking used to mean staying in touch with colleagues, friends...

Ready, aim, snow

Thursday, January 13, 2011

Murphy resident Caris Banks, 3, takes aim in the snow of Jan. 9....

Collin County health receives top rankings

Friday, January 07, 2011

Collin County residents have the best overall health status of all Texas...

Accolades keep coming for Murphy strategy game inventor

Thursday, January 06, 2011

Arimaa, the chess-like game created by Murphy resident Omar Syed, won ...

MFD gets, gives holiday spirit

Wednesday, December 22, 2010

Whether inspired by ghostly visits or just plain full of Christmas cheer...

Murphy Fire Rescue takes Santa on ride-along

Dec. 16, 2010

While the reindeer are getting rested and the sleigh is being readied,...

Youth orchestra tunes up for Oasis Jazz Awards performance

Thursday, December 16, 2010

Talent, timing and a bit of destiny converged. The result: an invitation...

Twists, turns flip student into spotlight

Monday, December 13, 2010

Poised. Well-spoken. Goal-oriented. Focused. And 14 years old....

Make a joyful noise!

Friday, December 10, 2010

Laughter, music and fun were the rule at Christmas in the Park on Dec....

Fire house gathers gifts for children

Saturday, December 04, 2010

Murphy's Central Fire Station, 206 N. Murphy Rd., will become toy center...

Giving thanks to those who give

Thursday, December 02, 2010

When people hear of a 9-year-old girl who shaves her head to raise fun...

Murphy Christmas in the Park set for Dec. 2

Tuesday, November 23, 2010

This year's annual Christmas Tree Lighting ceremony and holiday spectacular...

Bogges Elementary assembly honors vets

Thursday, November 18, 2010

Each year, the Bogges Elementary Veterans Day program seems to get bl...

Memories take root at Hunt Garden

Thursday, November 11, 2010

Brownie Girl Scouts and the Fifth-Grade Student Council planted flower...

Local cookbook author wins national contest

Thursday, November 11, 2010

Murphy resident and cookbook author Susan Lavery was chosen as the Oct...

Kirkin o the Tartans this Sunday

Friday, November 05, 2010

Corinth Presbyterian Church will celebrate the Kirkin o the Tartans at...

School, city dignitaries gather to celebrate new ISD campus

Wednesday, November 03, 2010

with recording artists. It's a platform to keep music alive and let new jazz artists get some structured time with guys who have been doing it forever. This seemed a good way to get it ready for kickoff."

Strings of Color Orchestra will perform with vocalist Ken Lattimore and musician Tom Braxton at the Oasis Jazz Awards matinee show.

Along with the challenge of preparing music for the performance is the challenge of paying to get there. Each student's trip, including airfare, hotel and some meals will total about \$850.

"We are also responsible for paying the cartage fees to cart our larger instruments, so everyone is aware that we may need to use any excess funds raised toward the instrument travel expenses," Planks said. "We are asking the parents to aim a little higher so that the kids have some additional spending money for meals that are not included in the package and any money they may want to use for souvenirs."

Students have sold cookie dough and "Passbooks" and will be performing at Mt. Hebron Baptist Church Dec. 19. The church raises an offering to support SOC.

Another way SOC is raising money is through the FirstGiving.com website. A page is set up for the orchestra and all of its members (FirstGiving.com/StringsOfColor). Donors can contribute to the group at large or to individual members.

To date, they've raised just over \$4,600, but there's a long way to go. With 26 members at \$850 per member, they need more than \$22,000 – and that's not including instrument travel expenses.

"We need to put down deposits along the way and March 12 isn't that far away! Frankly, we could use a lot more help," Planks said. "The kids are very excited and are looking forward to traveling and performing together. I think a different member asks me at each rehearsal if their favorite artist will be at the awards show. This has presented a wonderful opportunity for me to tell them about the jazz artists that will be in attendance as well as expose them to their music. It's an opportunity we don't want to miss."

Strings of Color Orchestra has made a difference in the lives of its members.

"One young man who is in his fourth year with the group once said that SOC saved his life," Planks said. "Being able to perform with SOC helped him to take his mind off some of the problems that he was experiencing, and it gave him renewed focus. Some have told me that they were undecided about their paths once they graduated from high school, and several of them have gone on to major or minor in music. I believe that SOC has afforded many of the members' solo opportunities that their own school programs (because of the size of many public school music programs) could not offer."

As a public school teacher, Planks knows firsthand how difficult it can be to give the personal attention every student needs to excel on a string instrument.

"Time just doesn't allow it. SOC is smaller and easier to personally guide those that need the extra help. I'm pretty sure that our selection of music has been very rewarding for many of the members as well. I love performing the classical literature, but I think more classrooms need to explore more literature from pop culture. I think the right mix can be very educational and rewarding for everyone involved," he said.

To help send the Strings of Color Orchestra to the Oasis Jazz Awards, visit www.FirstGiving.com/StringsOfColor or contact Planks at ron.planks@pisd.edu or by phone at 214-418-2399.

Although concrete had already been poured and construction had begun, ...

Firefighters pretty in pink

Thursday, October 28, 2010

Murphy firefighters are selling pink T-shirts to raise funds for breas...

Early voting for Nov. 2 election continues

Friday, October 22, 2010

Early voting for the Nov. 2 election continues through Oct. 29. Find I...

Wylie airman teaches live-saving techniques

Thursday, October 21, 2010

SCOTT AIR FORCE BASE, III. Airmen with the 375th Security Forces Squad...

MFD open house roaring success

Thursday, October 14, 2010

More than 600 people visited the Murphy Firehouse during the 6th Annua...

MFD Open House, park dedications fire up city's October events

Thursday, October 07, 2010

Murphy Fire Rescues Open House kicks off a month full of city events....

Murphy man declares District Clerk candidacy

Thursday, October 07, 2010

Harvey Tepfer, a Murphy resident, has become a write-in candidate for ...

PESH football coach talks to chamber

Monday, October 04, 2010

Chamber chairman Steve Long, right, presents an appreciation gift to P...

FC Dallas gives free tickets to PISD students

Friday, October 01, 2010

FC Dallas has announced that in honor of Collin County Community Night...

Rain cancels most Maize Days events

Thursday, September 30, 2010

Despite the weather, the first annual A-Maize-ing 5K and Fun Run was h...

Maize Days festival Saturday

Thursday, September 23, 2010

Excitement is building for Murphy Maize Days this Saturday. It starts ...

Local teen tapped as Dream Girl

Friday, September 17, 2010

After a short three-month pageant career, Taylor Lewis has been named ...

Sounds of the Season

Thursday, September 02, 2010

The Plano East Senior High School Marching Band kicked off the year wi...

Travis Farm, family celebrated

Thursday, August 26, 2010

Neighbors, city officials, members of the Travis family and lots and l...

Car show revs up hot summer nights

Thursday, August 19, 2010

Somehow it didnt seem to matter you were broiling in the middle of the...

Belle of the ball

Thursday, August 5, 2010

Caitlin Giorgio has been performing for audiences since first grade. H...

MPD lock down car crimes

Thursday, July 29, 2010

Local business, MPD team up for campaign...

Cemetery Association unveils new business level memberships

Thursday, July 29, 2010

The Cemetery Association of Murphy has created a new Benefactor Member...

Building plans

Thursday, July 22, 2010

Construction on new buildings continues in the summer. ...

Maize Days sign ups beginning

Thursday, July 22, 2010

The city of Murphy is reminding residents to reserve Sept. 24 and 25 o...

Gulf oil tragedy makes environmental sci-fi timely read

Thursday, July 15, 2010

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