

Spotlight: Bonnie Calhoun

Music Education Students Determined to Save Music Education

Without funding music education, it will cease to exist. Bonnie Calhoun, a student at West Chester University, is worried about the future of music education. She's watched the arts become increasingly inaccessible due to lack of funding, and she wanted to do what she could to change that. She decided to steer an on-campus effort to raise money for Musicopia. With the support of WCU Director of Orchestral Studies Joseph Caminiti, Bonnie and her peers raised \$3,000 so that Musicopia can continue providing access to in-school music education.

Bonnie wants to make a difference as a music educator. She strives to better herself for the sake of her future students, and leads a busy life as a college student. She has a double major in music education and psychology, plays in her school's orchestra, is involved in a fraternity on campus, and teaches string instrument lessons. On top of that, she found time to teach herself how to fundraise effectively, keep her peers motivated, and put her all into reaching her \$3,000 fundraising goal.

"If it wasn't Musicopia, I don't think we would have been as successful," Bonnie explained. Musicopia stood out to her because of its instrument donation program. She understood first-hand how the cost of owning an instrument is a barrier to playing music. It took her six years to save up the money to buy a cello, the instrument she primarily plays.

She was also attracted to the non-profit because of its focus on serving students in underfunded communities. Its mission to make music education accessible to all children, regardless of circumstance, was personal to her. "I grew up in a community that didn't have a lot of money. My afterschool music program helped me deal with my home life. It's a great experience for kids in the same boat," Bonnie stressed.

Bonnie wasn't alone; Musicopia's mission fired up the other musicians in the WCU Symphony Orchestra. "The majority of the students in the Symphony Orchestra are music education students. We hear all the time that music education programs are dying. We don't want that to happen because we know how lucky we were to have had it," she explained. "This is important to them because they went into music education to help people."

Bonnie insisted to her peers that fundraising was a skill they needed to master as future educators. She tried to make fundraising competitive to motivate her peers further. Her orchestra classmates raised money in teams based on the instrument they played and were determined to one-up each other. "Some students would say, 'I can't donate any more money, but here's what I can do: I'm going to volunteer. That way, the money I raise can count for my team'. It inspired people to sign up." Bonnie also recruited help from Tau Beta Sigma Honorary Band Sorority, a co-educational service sorority, and her fraternity Phi Sigma Pi, a mixed-sex national honor fraternity.

The students raised \$3,000 through multiple fundraisers throughout the Spring 2022 Semester and hosted instrument donation drives for Musicopia. West Chester University Symphony Orchestra listed Musicopia as its beneficiary for its concert and donated four months' worth of profit from its merchandise. Additionally, Bonnie and her peers hosted a plethora of fundraisers, such as bake sales, plant sales, and coffee and donut sales.

Making this possible was far from easy and took a lot of dedication from all parties involved. Bonnie, in particular, was willing to go the extra mile to make an impact. One of the students' most popular fundraisers was plant sales, selling out on two of three occasions. Bonnie drove an hour each way to pick up the least expensive plants to give Musicopia the highest profit margin.

This was only Bonnie's second fundraising experience. She credits her success to all she learned from fellow WCU students who previously hosted fundraisers and her peers who encouraged her when she doubted herself. "I knew I couldn't do it alone. I didn't want to do it alone," Bonnie stressed. "If you want to help others, people will come together. It was rewarding to have an idea for so long and see everyone excited to be involved."

The hard work and dedication she's shown gives us a glimpse into the kind of teacher she'll be for her future students. We're so excited to see where Bonnie's career will take her and how many lives she'll impact. Thank you, Bonnie and peers, for all your help and for being great advocates for Musicopia!