

## Introducing HOME Senior: A Band of Parents from Fanny Jackson Coppin School



HOME Band (left) and HOME Sr. (right) at last year's end-of-year concert.

The HOME Band, Musicopia's after-school rock band at Fanny Jackson Coppin School, creates a tight-knit, creative community and sparks a passion for playing music. Through regular rehearsals and community performances, students in HOME develop their musical skills, gain confidence, and learn how to play as an ensemble. In addition to the HOME Band, this music program includes HOME Jr., which serves as a starting point for younger beginner musicians. Last year, the program added a new group to perform with the two student bands: HOME Senior. The hope is that this new band, comprised of parents of HOME Band and HOME Junior, will deepen parent involvement in the program.

Chris "Mr. A" Argerakis, the music teacher who runs the HOME Band, had been playing with the idea of adding a community band to HOME's shows for students to see that music can be a lifelong passion. Chris mentioned the idea to Beth Kahley, who had been volunteering with the band for all three years that her daughter, Esme, had been part of HOME. Beth talked to a few HOME parents who also play instruments – both professionally or as a hobby in their youth – and had a running joke about starting a band together.

Before last year's holiday show, Chris tasked Beth with creating an opening act outside the school's student community. "Literally, at the eleventh hour, I wrote out to some of the guys – parents who I knew played – and said, 'Hey, would you be interested in throwing something together?' and we did." HOME Sr.'s performance was so fun for the student and parent musicians alike that Chris wanted HOME Sr. to perform again at the end-of-the-year concert, which they did!

For Beth, joining HOME Sr. allowed her to reconnect with her musical roots. "I've always been drawn to music in some form. Once I left college and had children, I didn't prioritize the time to

find an ensemble to play with, to keep singing, to keep playing violin. I saw HOME Sr. as a clear opportunity for me to reengage in being musical,” she explained. Beth grew up playing music as her grandfather was a music teacher. She passed down that love for music to her two children, who started piano lessons around five or six, the same age she had. From volunteering with HOME, she sees the impact that playing in HOME has on Esme. “Piano lessons are great, but I think being part of the band is something so much more than the music. It’s being a part of the group,” she shared.

Both of HOME Sr.’s performances last year inspired other parents to join to rediscover their musical talents as Beth had. Beth hopes this excitement around a parent band will lead to more parent volunteers supporting Mr. A’s efforts in managing the two student rock bands. The program has grown over the years, posing a significant challenge. Before the pandemic, Chris allowed more students to join the band than he had the capacity to teach, knowing that many students’ interests would fade and they’d gradually drop out. Now, every student who joins sticks with it, and there’s even a waitlist of eager students, including Beth’s third-grade son.

Fortunately, Beth’s efforts have already helped her recruit another parent to volunteer. Lou, a bassist who has played professionally and performed with HOME Senior, has started volunteering at HOME Band rehearsals. His bass expertise, along with Beth’s focus on the pianists, will provide much-needed support for Mr. A. Beth’s goal is to get more parents involved so that every instrument group in the band receives more individualized coaching.

Being a part of HOME has been incredibly fulfilling for Beth. She’s grateful not only for the chance to play in a band again but also for the opportunity to support the program. “There’s just something very special about Chris and this whole program he’s built. It’s unreal what he does and how much blood, sweat, and tears he’s put into it,” Beth shared. “He’s been so dedicated to these kids and the program for 15 years and we’re honored to help him in any way we can.”

We look forward to seeing how the HOME Band grows in the coming years and how the inclusion of HOME Senior will play a role in that growth.