

SEE THEM SOAR



by JoAnn Kinion Davis
Photo by Harlan Hambricht

The theme of the current fund-raising campaign of the Golden Isles Youth Orchestra is “Soaring to new heights,” which is celebrating ten years of making classical music available to youngsters in Southeast Georgia. The GIYO, which is no longer a part of the Symphony of Coastal Georgia but is now its own 501(c) 3, is dependent upon contributions from individuals, family foundations and organizations to continue to make symphonic music an integral part of the lives of the children of our community. The GIYO continues to offer traditional programs each year as well as innovative new ones.

Officially, the group began in 2005 when Lynn Fogarty founded the “Fiddlers of Glynn.” Glynn County Schools began a program of instruction; the first youth concert was held on December 11, 2005. This began a unique school-community partnership has continued and grown. The early orchestra programs in the schools flourished as students aspired to become good enough to join the youth orchestra. Strings classes were part of the curriculum in most Glynn County elementary schools and, regardless of their home address, strings students were allowed to enroll in orchestra programs at Glynn Middle and Glynn Academy.



Starting in 2008, the economic slowdown caused severe budget cuts in the school’s Fine Arts areas, including strings instruction. Youth symphony board members accepted the challenge of continuing the organization despite the diminishing availability of instructional programs taught by strings teachers. Currently there is no school-day orchestra instruction in any Glynn County elementary school, only instruction in 3 of the 4 district middle schools, and instruction only at one of the district’s two high schools.

The challenge of creating and improving young musicians has fallen on the youth symphony board which, in the past seven years, has been committed to raising funds to subsidize private and small group lessons, to offer summer camp experiences, to purchase and rent instru-

ments, to sponsor guest artists, to retain world-class conductors for our two youth orchestras and to perform at churches and community events.

In the past five years, the GIYO has created a series of new programs designed to increase the number of opportunities for local youngsters to study and play classical music. A partnership with Golden Isles Live! has allowed youth orchestra participants to take master classes with visiting musicians. GIYO’s *STRING-on!*, which allows all participating fifth graders to develop an understanding of such science concepts as pitch, frequency, vibration and resonance while learning to play simple songs on the violin, has been offered at no cost to the school in eight Glynn and Camden County elementary schools. In 2011, then-youth symphony music director Luis Haza (*continues*)

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developed an intensive summer camp musical experience taught at the College of Coastal Georgia, by local and regional professional musicians. This opportunity will continue this summer. GIYO's Chamber Ensemble performs at a myriad of events, allowing the more experienced players to perform before large and small, formal and informal, indoor and outdoor gatherings. Because of requests by parents, low cost small group and private instruction is currently being offered in afterschool programs or on Saturdays at Glynn and Needwood Middle Schools, and at St. Mary's and C.B. Greer Elementary Schools.

GIYO board member Barbara Sullivan has served as chairperson of the organization's annual campaign for the last six years. She is in contact with many donors, most of whom are amazed that the young students, under the direction of Maestro Pena, can play such difficult music. "The May first concert will be a treat," she comments. "The people in our community have been so supportive by donating funds for lessons and by attending our concerts and the yearly benefit for camp. Without such support, the musicians could not have their present success. All are grateful to be living in such a special place."

Many traditions associated with youth music in the Golden Isles will continue this May when current musical director and conductor Jorge Pena raises his baton to start GIYO's annual spring concert. This event, to be held this year on May 1, at 3:00 p.m. in the historic Glynn Academy Memorial Auditorium, will conclude the GIYO's year-long 10th Anniversary Celebration. Nonagenarian Bill Brown, who has attended every GIYO concert since it was founded, will again be in the audience. The ten year tradition of the orchestra always



including a child of Paul and Christina Clarke will continue. Current concertmaster Cason is the third Clarke player, and youngest daughter Emma is waiting in the wings. The young musicians will sit in chairs donated by Roslyn Rensch Noah and some will play instruments given to the group by Mary Ellen Kuehm, James McAdams and the Plum Creek Foundation. Col. Tom Fuller and Dixie Alford will again be seated in the audience, representing the late Anne Fuller, a local cellist who was passionate about having a local youth orchestra. Other seats in the auditorium will be filled by family and friends of the young musicians, as well as local donors who believe symphonic music should be an integral part of the lives of all children. Come be part of the audience for this special concert and see and hear what incredible things can happen when you give young musicians wings!

For more information about the Golden Isles Youth Orchestra or the Spring Concert, visit goldenislesyouthorchestra.org.