

Music Education for Social Justice:  
A Case Study of the North Park Middle School Band  
by  
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## ABSTRACT

The North Park Middle School Band, in Pico Rivera, California, is an exemplary model of a band program grounded in the principles of social justice. Three facets guide the program: Social Outreach, Cultural Outreach, and *Kids Helping Kids*. This qualitative study explores what led the director to create this program, its current structure as well as its historical development, and the impact the program is having on the students involved and the community to which they reach.

Between the months of September and December 2012, I spent a total of three weeks with the students, parents, and the director of the North Park Band, Ron Wakefield. In that time, the students were observed during band rehearsals on typical school days. Additionally, I traveled with the band to three separate outreach concerts at the Los Angeles Veterans Healthcare Facility, nursing homes and assisted living centers, as well as the Isaiah House, a homeless shelter for women and children. I observed the students and their interactions with the residents of those facilities, and took detailed observation notes. In addition, a survey was distributed to students in the top two bands, interviews were conducted with current students and a former student, a parent and a former parent, and the director.

The North Park Band program structure leads students to develop an unusually high level of responsibility. Students gain an understanding of current issues in society and demonstrate compassion towards other human beings. In many cases, the students discover a sense of life purpose through the program and feel that they have a

responsibility to help their community. While a central focus of the program is on humanistic values, it is evident that the students also receive a quality music education.

DEDICATION

*For my brother, Tommy*

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to sincerely thank Ron Wakefield for welcoming me into his program, generously contributing his time and expertise to my research, and for being a pioneer in the field of music education. Like the band students at North Park Middle School, I have become a better person through my interactions with Ron and my experiences with his program. I would also like to acknowledge the students who graciously accepted me into their lives from the first moment I entered the school. I was honored by their friendship and am privileged to call myself an honorary member of the North Park Band family. Furthermore, this study would not have been possible without the guidance and support provided by Professor Gary W. Hill and Dr. Margaret Schmidt. Their vision and wisdom gave me the courage and the strength needed to complete this paper. Finally, I would like to thank my partner, Sarah Jane Gilbert. Not only did she support me throughout this entire degree program, she also spent many hours carefully editing this paper. Thank you.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	Page
1. INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW.....	1
Introduction.....	1
Methodology.....	2
Literature Review.....	4
Purpose.....	17
Organization.....	18
2. HISTORICAL ACCOUNT OF NORTH PARK BAND AND ITS DIRECTOR... 19	
Introduction to the North Park Middle School Band.....	19
Ron Wakefield’s Transition from Performer to Teacher.....	23
Current Structure of the Band Program.....	25
The History of the North Park Band.....	35
Summary.....	49
3. IMPACT OF PROGRAM.....	50
Student Responsibility.....	50
Musical Instruction.....	61
Development of Compassion and Understanding.....	63
Music for the Good of Others.....	66
Community Impact.....	68
Cultivating the Three Teaching Goals: Post-Concert Discussions.....	71

Epilogue.....	74
4. DEBATES, FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS, FINAL THOUGHTS.....	77
Music Education? Or Something Else.....	77
My Interpretation of Ron’s Teaching Style: How He Does It.....	80
Summary.....	86
Recommendations for K-12 and Higher Education Teachers.....	89
Areas for Further Research.....	93
Final Thoughts.....	94
REFERENCES.....	98
APPENDICES	
A RON WAKEFIELD INTERVIEW.....	101
B PARENT, FORMER STUDENT, FORMER PARENT INTERVIEW.....	151
C STUDENT SURVEY RESPONSES.....	169
D STUDENT PRACTICE LOG ENTRIES.....	183
E POST-CONCERT DISCUSSIONS.....	190

## INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The music education I received throughout my childhood led to many transformational experiences. I developed a deep love for music and felt that it had a unique ability to unite people. As an undergraduate student, my feelings that music could literally change the world intensified. Following five years of teaching middle and high school band in a suburb of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, I entered a master's degree program in music education and was introduced to the philosophy of social justice in music education. The concept that music, and more precisely music education, could have a direct impact on society was further strengthened as I realized music educators and philosophers were writing papers and having conferences devoted to social justice in music education. In 2011 I entered the doctoral conducting program at Arizona State University (ASU). Professor Gary W. Hill hosted a band education symposium through the College Band Directors National Association in the summer of 2012 and Ron Wakefield, director of the North Park Middle School Band in Pico Rivera, California, presented at that symposium. Through his presentations, Ron demonstrated that his program exemplified many of the principles I had become so passionate about. North Park appeared to have an exemplary model of a band program characterized by instructional ends based on human values and the ideals of social justice in addition to the development of musical skills and knowledge; subsequently, I embarked on a thorough study of the North Park Band program.



The purpose of this qualitative study is twofold. The first purpose is to document the structural details and educational means involved with the North Park Band program as well as the historical development of the program and its director. The second purpose is to explore the program's impact on the students involved and the people who are the focus of the outreach. This chapter explains the methodology of the study, reviews literature written on the subject of social justice in music education, outlines the research questions for the study, and provides an overview of the organizational structure of the paper.

### **Methodology**

The North Park Band program includes four separate bands: Beginning Band, Intermediate Band, Advanced Band, and Honor Band. Students do not audition for these bands, instead Ron observes the students' musical and personal development throughout the year and assigns them to a band. Only the Advanced and Honor Bands perform the social outreach concerts, therefore this study focuses on the students and the activities of those two ensembles.

I spent a total of three weeks, over the course of four months, with the students, parents, and the director, Ron Wakefield. I was able to observe the students in their band activities during typical school days, as well as during three separate outreach concerts. In November, I went with the Honor and Advanced bands to an outreach concert at the Los Angeles Veterans Healthcare Facility where the two bands played simultaneous concerts in the Veterans Assisted Living Center and the Veterans Nursing Home. In December

2012, I traveled with the Honor band on “Senior Day,” a day Ron designates once a year to perform outreach concerts for senior citizens. That day of outreach included visiting a nursing home for people diagnosed with Alzheimer’s Disease and an assisted living center. Lastly, I joined the students as they performed their annual Christmas Concert at the Isaiah House, a facility for homeless women and children.

Detailed observations were recorded of the students in these different environments. I distributed a survey to the students in the top two bands, the Honor and Advanced Bands; approximately 60% of these surveys were returned. A selection of the surveys can be found in Appendix C. Fifteen students, one parent, and one former parent of the program were interviewed and many hours were spent interviewing the director of the program. On several occasions outside the formal data gathering procedures, Ron and the students offered spontaneous comments that became part of the data for this study. I recorded each interview and transcribed those that were most reflective of student impact; transcripts for the director interviews are included in Appendix A, while the student and parent interviews are included in Appendix B. Transcriptions of the discussions that followed three outreach concerts can be found in Appendix E. Students in the band have a weekly writing assignment in which they write about an act of kindness they displayed during the week or about their reflections of an outreach concert. I collected many of those writing samples, a selection of which is included in Appendix D. Although I did not interview the residents or staff members of the facilities the band visited, I witnessed the students’ interactions with these people during the outreach concerts and made notes of these observations. Except for Ron Wakefield and Tiffany, a homeless child who has

been cited in newspaper articles, every name in this paper has been changed to protect the privacy of those involved.

### **Literature Review: Social Justice in Music Education**

Significant development has occurred in the last decade with regard to research in the area of social justice in music education. As the idea has developed among music educators and philosophers, it seems to have traveled down two different yet related paths. The first path identifies ways in which the teaching methods and access to music education can be socially just. This path involves ideas about, but is not limited to, multiculturalism in music education, providing equal access to high quality music education to all members of society, eliminating gender biases related to choice of instruments or participation in certain ensembles, and the potential for cultures to be understood and embraced through repertoire selection and methods of instruction. Literature on these topics is not included in this review. The second path of social justice in music education follows a philosophy that is more pertinent to this study. This path encompasses the notion that music education can lead students and audiences to create social change and social justice in our communities. I will call this path “Music Education *for* Social Justice.” For this research project, the review of selected research regarding this subject includes: defining justice; socializing music education; and current practices of music education for social justice. The literature includes research that was especially meaningful to me in shaping my philosophy of music education, and is not necessarily

representative of the entire body of research concerning social justice in education or music education.

### **Defining Justice**

Facets of many papers regarding social justice in music education focus on defining justice. In 2007, Wayne Bowman, former editor of the journal *Action, Criticism, and Theory* [ACT] *for Music Education*, wrote an introduction for ACT Volume 6, Issue 4, an issue completely devoted to the topic of social justice in music education. In *Who's Asking (Who's Answering): Theorizing Social Justice in Music Education*, Bowman begins to define justice by stating that the idea "...seems straightforward enough. Just treat people fairly and equitably" (p. 3). However, Bowman then lists a multitude of questions showing that the idea of justice is not as simple as it might seem:

What constitutes fairness, after all? What might it mean to treat people equitably in a highly specialized and differentiated area of endeavor like music? Whose version of justice should prevail? To what ends are appeals to "justice" ultimately devoted? Why *social* justice? "Justice" as opposed to what? How are we to resolve disputes in which one person's or one group's justice is at odds with another's? Who gets to define or impose the terms of engagements, so to speak? Under what circumstances should I agree to relinquish my personal freedom – my presumed freedom to do anything I wish in whatever way I choose – in the interests of a greater good? Who can say, and on what grounds, that this "greater good" is actually *good for me*? What happens when the prevailing view of justice is just plain wrong? ...Perhaps the only thing straightforward about social justice in music education is that it is not straightforward. (p. 3)

Bowman states that a point found in much of the literature on social justice is the idea of "situatedness," which suggests that what is good for one group in one situation might actually create an injustice for another group. He argues that social justice can be more

easily understood if looked at as a process rather than a thing (p. 4) and goes on to look at different processes of realizing justice throughout the world.

Understanding that our framework for justice is based on a society rooted in the beliefs and values of the Judeo-Christian system is important because it allows us to realize that our ideas for justice are framed in this view (p. 4). Bowman discusses an alternative to Christian beliefs by looking at the Buddhist religion, which teaches communal good is promoted through the pursuit of individual goodness. Since selflessness in Buddhism "...entails radical identification with Others, there can be no good for the self that is not at the same time good for others" (p. 9).

This Buddhist philosophy helps to solve issues presented in Habermas's theory of communicative rationality, otherwise known as discourse ethics. This theory is mainly concerned with the complications that arise from living in a pluralistic world, where the ability for one group or person to thrive often infringes on the abilities of another group or person to thrive. Bowman explains that Habermas attempts to describe "a way of accomplishing social coordination amongst diverse individuals by resorting to communication rather than coercion" (p. 6). This theory aims to realize justice through "the pursuit of agreement amidst difference, the assurance of cooperation amidst conflicting interests" (p. 6).

Bowman's paper closes with the argument that sometimes, equal treatment of all might not be a just response. "In some situations an individual's or a minority's need for help may render necessary an asymmetrical or unequal course of action. And in such

situations, resorting to principles of justice grounded in equal treatment may deprive others of their full due” (p. 11). Because of this, a solution that appears to be just or equal might not create a just result. Bowman states that the missing dimension here is one that “involves empathy, compassion, and care – concerns that take us well beyond the measured, formulaic, tit-for-tat realm of justice” and instead is grounded “not so much in obligation to as unconditional responsibility to and for the other” (p. 11).

A warning that has come from different philosophers when discussing justice is to not mistake charity for justice. Lise Vaugois, of the University of Toronto, published a paper in the same issue of ACT entitled *Social Justice and Music Education: Claiming the Space of Music Education as a Site of Postcolonial Contestation*. In this paper Vaugois argues that in order to address social justice, people must first theorize the causes and manifestations of injustice (p. 163). Without critical exploration of our own situations and philosophies, she says that “we risk getting caught up in discourses of charity – discourses that too often result in ‘feel good’ projects that valorize the giver while maintaining the inferior position of the receiver” (p. 163). Eric Shieh wrote an article discussing his experience at a conference held at the University of Toronto, *Engagements and Exclusions in Music, Education, and the Arts*, where the mantra was “Charity is not Justice” (In Dialogue, p. 204). Many of the themes throughout the conference presented the idea that a group providing acts of justice for a less privileged group creates injustice automatically because of the assumption that the best interest of the less privileged group is the same as the privileged group. This type of thought inherently implies a separation

between the two groups where one group is in some way on a higher level than the other group.

Deborah Bradley articulates this point more directly in her paper published in the aforementioned ACT issue, *The Sounds of Silence: Talking Race in Music Education* when she explains,

Social justice may, for instance, be misconstrued as an act of charity: classes study and perform music from another culture, viewed through a lens that suggests the people of that culture somehow need “rescuing,” and resulting in a perceived need to “do something” that leads in turn to the donation of concert proceeds to some related cause. (p. 133)

She goes on to say that while people might “feel good” about these types of charitable endeavors, they “reinforce an unacknowledged and deeply problematic sense of moral superiority” (p. 133). It must be noted that these, along with similar and contrasting notions concerning the evolution and application of altruism of all kinds, are the focus of much research in many fields, including evolutionary and cognitive psychology.

### **Socializing Music Education**

David Elliot contributed a paper to the ACT journal entitled “*Socializing*” *Music Education*. In this paper Elliot first defines different forms of justice. Legal justice “concerns the application of laws and procedures to individuals and social organizations through a system of rules, formulated by a culture and/or a state such that penalties exist for disobedience” whereby judges, not legislators, have the power to “guarantee people fairness, justice, and liberty” (p. 62). Distributive justice involves two related questions, “Who gets what, and how? and, Who should get what, and how?” (p. 64). Economic

justice is concerned with the distribution of finances while procedural justice refers to “the principles and procedures used in deciding the allocation of goods and the societal systems that distribute those goods” (p. 64). Lastly, Elliot speaks of cultural justice, which involves “many crucial matters of identity, such as race, ethnicity, gender, religion, and the many forms of oppression that often attend them” and notes further that “identity issues implicate multiple forms of expression, impression, and oppression” (p. 65-66).

To delve further into the subject of social justice, Elliot highlights specific social movements throughout history, saying that, “if we wish to rethink and revitalize music teaching and learning by incorporating social justice into our aims and strategies, it may be useful to re-vision our profession as a social movement” (p. 69). He explains that social movements begin with utopian ideals, citing that the enslaved Black people of the early 1800’s had utopian dreams of freedom and were then released from slavery 60 years later. “Visionary thinking is a necessary prelude to progress in music education as/for social justice” (p. 69). Elliot takes the reader through the various developments in the African American civil rights movement, stressing that these types of movements grow slowly and progress in waves. He says we can generalize that successful civil rights movements “focus on specific grievances of social justice, plan and carry out targeted public protests, capitalize on the courts, create educational opportunities for youth, and develop strategies for contention (strikes, marches, sit-ins, media events, and cultural appropriation)” (p. 71).



After writing about other successful social movements, Elliot reviews the three aspects the movements have in common. He quotes from Jean Anyon's book, *Radical Possibilities: Public Policy, Urban Education, and New Social Movement*, "Raising people's consciousness about their oppression through reflection and talk is not enough: Physical and emotional support for actual participation in public contention is required" (p. 73). Elliot emphasizes, "This point is extremely important for educating our students towards participating *for* social justice. To motivate people to join a social movement it is essential that they engage in some kind of action" (p. 73). The second feature successful social movements share is that they depend on major contributions from young people. Elliot again quotes Anyon, "It is doubtful that social movements would develop at all without the central participation of the young" (p. 73-74). The third aspect common to successful social movements is the use of all forms of culture and media to focus public attention on the demand for social justice.

Elliot closes his paper with a passionate argument for socializing music education, saying first that we must re-conceive and mobilize music education as a social movement. He says this will require,

...that we participate actively in social *coalitions for educational justice* dedicated to reclaiming education *for* democracy and social justice. Closely related, we need to build coalitions with scholars, teacher educators, and teachers who are already 'socializing and justicing' their fields, with the intent of sharing strategies, building mutual strength, and making our colleagues aware of what we are uniquely able to offer. (p. 84)

He argues that we must empower our profession and our students to “participate as assertive, activist music makers and leaders for social justice” and inspire our students “to make music *for* social justice” (p. 84).

In order to enact a change of this magnitude, Elliot argues that we need to reconsider our profession’s most deeply engrained assumptions, mainly the aesthetic assumption that the value of music is intrinsic. He poses the questions, “Are we purely teachers, musicians, academics, and/or public intellectuals? Or can we ‘move out into the social world,’ developing new ways of educating a critical mass of future music teachers who have the understandings (both theoretical and practical) and the dispositions to infuse their aims and pedagogies with goals of social justice and social activism?” (p. 84-85).

In 2000, Wayne Bowman presented a lecture at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign entitled *Music as Ethical Encounter*. Early in the lecture, Bowman discusses the issue of music being fundamentally separated from ethical concerns beginning with the Enlightenment Project (approximately 1630-1850). He explains that this movement effectively separated human life into various segments, each with its own norms and often incompatible with the other segments (p. 12). He refers to Enlightenment philosopher Immanuel Kant (1720-1804) and his three critiques of human life: the first is his critique of reason, the second is an exploration of “the so-called practical judgments of the moral sphere,” and the third examines aesthetic judgments (p. 12). Bowman explains that remembering how much of our current culture stems from these beliefs is important

because in his effort to chart human life and meaning, Kant in fact divided human life and meaning. Different delineations of Kant's categories could have resulted in very different implications for music and all things aesthetic. Since Kant began with reason and ended with aesthetic judgment, all things aesthetic took on a connotation that suggested these ideas were "leftovers," a point which arts educators are still battling today (p. 12). Most important for the discussion in Bowman's paper and for this paper, Bowman explains that the boundaries between these facets of life gradually came "to exempt or liberate 'aesthetic experience' from any notable moral task" and that "this move not only exempted things like music from ethical obligation or commitment, it also deprived them of that kind of significance. Hence, the realm of the 'aesthetic' emerged as something individual, self-oriented, inward, and autonomous" (p. 13).

Bowman asserts that education in general is ethical when concerned with matters such as character, identity, cultivation, and change. He says that a musical education is particularly, if not uniquely, suited for developing ethical characteristics in people and he lists ten reasons to justify his argument:

1. Musical experience imparts habits and dispositions, and nurtures character that is comfortable with and adept at responding to contingency and particularity...
2. Music is a fundamentally social and intersubjective endeavor, guided by concern for right action with and toward musical others...
3. Music requires willingness to accept one's initial inadequacy, acknowledging the authority and expertise of others...Apprenticeship and mentorship is an indispensable stage in the development of musical know-how.
4. Music requires an attitude of care, concern, and commitment toward a good outside the self and its interests; outside the realms of the material, the technical, and the factual. These truths are particularly significant as

society grows increasingly individualistic, self-centered, and materialistic... This ethic of care, the act of investing oneself in not just a personal action but a collective social practice, has consequences for valuing that extend well beyond the musical domain...

5. Music requires acceptance of and deference to standards of excellence that are consensual, fluid, and often difficult to articulate. To become fluent in a musical practice, one must subject one's attitudes, choices, preferences, and actions to the standards that define and regulate the practice, standards that are seldom codified, can never be rendered wholly explicit, and change over time...
6. Music relies fundamentally upon recognition of what is due, to whom, in what degree, under what kind of circumstances; and when deviation is permissible or desirable. Insights and abilities like these cannot be technically transmitted, only learned gradually through immersion...
7. [Ensemble] music's most important successes are never mere personal gains, but benefit the entire collaborative community of those engaged in and committed to the practice and its advancement.
8. Musical successes depend not just upon what one knows, or upon skills one has acquired. They are bound closely to who one is, to one's character, such that one's musical accomplishments and shortcomings are inevitably and unavoidably manifestations or reflections of one's personal identity.
9. [Music making] demands of us active engagement in creating and sustaining community – or better yet, local forms of community, concerned with shared, collective goods rather than individual or private ones.
10. To the extent it realizes all the foregoing, musical experience gives us vivid examples of life lived well: with unity, meaning, direction, purpose, and integrity. In so doing it raises our expectations of other, subsequent experience. (Ethical Encounter, p. 17-20)

Bowman concludes his lecture by stating his concern that music educators are more interested in “technical expertise than with ethical or practical expertise, more interested in training than educating.” He warns, “When we engage in musical instruction as if its ends are self-evident, utterly uncontroversial, pre-ordained, and outside our scope of concern, we unwittingly subscribe to conceptions of music and music education that neglect some of the most important potentials of each” (Ethical Encounter, p. 20).

## Current Practices

The June 2012 issue of the *Music Educator's Journal* features seven articles centered on social justice themes. While a few articles venture down the path of social justice issues *in* music education, many articles take the alternative path and discuss music education *for* social justice by giving examples of some recent practices. In *The Skin That We Sing*, Julia Shaw discusses specific ways in which music educators can develop practices that respond to cultural diversity. Rather than simply taking an approach of selecting repertoire that explores the world's musics, she says the purpose of the article is to show educators how they “can go beyond a surface treatment of diverse repertoire to one that develops students’ sociopolitical competence and empowers them toward social action” (p. 75). While selecting diverse repertoire is the starting point, we can also use this music to guide students “to discuss and delve deeply into sociopolitical issues related to different cultures” (p. 78). She suggests that teachers find ways to learn about the musical heritage in individual students’ families and to incorporate those musical values into classroom learning. She recommends that teachers find musical representatives from different cultures in their local communities and bring those people into the classroom. Shaw advocates for exploring different rehearsal strategies, ones that are less Western. She believes music teachers have great potential to effect social change, saying, “Because of music’s power as a cultural referent, music teachers are uniquely positioned to improve the quality of students’ educational experiences through culturally responsive practice” (p. 81).

*Music Education Behind Bars, Giving Voice to the Inmates and the Students Who Teach Them* is an article by Frank Abrahams, Professor of Music Education at Rider University, and two of his students, pre-service teachers Miranda Rowland and Kristian Kohler. The article tells the story of a music curriculum that allowed for two pre-service music educators to go to a prison and conduct a choir of inmates. Miranda and Kristian traveled to the jail every Wednesday night to conduct the choir of inmates and were faced with many logistical challenges; no spiral notebooks, pens or pencils were allowed, no iPods or speakers were allowed in the facility, and although there was a consistent core of people in the choir, the overall makeup of the group was not consistent from week to week (p. 68). However, the goals remained the same every week: “to build community among everyone present, make music that has meaning and value to the men, and provide them with opportunities for sharing, improvising, and performing” (p. 68). The abstract of the article states “the pre-service music teachers came to view music not as a subject to be studied but as a powerful agent of change” (p. 67). As a result of the program, both students gained confidence and felt they were making a difference and doing something that was important (p. 71). When speaking of the implications this program can have on classroom teaching, the pre-service teachers stated,

As music teachers who are committed to a social justice agenda, we acknowledge the responsibility to fully engage as equal participants in either prison or school classroom. In either situation, we share our thoughts and feelings and ensure that learning is a conversation, not a presentation. That model transforms all music teaching and learning. We are there to enrich their lives through singing, improvising, listening, and creating personal musical experiences. In so doing, we ourselves are changed. (p. 71)

The final article from this *MEJ* issue used in this review is by Randall Allsup and Eric Shieh, *Social Justice and Music Education: The Call for a Public Pedagogy*. The abstract of this article states:

At the heart of teaching others is the moral imperative to care. Social justice education begins with adopting a disposition to perceive and then act against indecencies and injustices. Teachers are public figures entrusted by a democratic society to act in the best interests of the children in their care. Music educators must embrace this social contract by “going public” or “coming out” – reaching beyond incomplete musical engagements and into larger and more intertwined social, artistic, and political domains. The authors refer to this stance as a public music pedagogy. (p. 47)

The article explains that there is an abundance of required curricula, standards, repertoire, festivals, and competitions to “eclipse the call to repair and transform [society]” (p. 48). While our programs are visible to the community, Allsup and Shieh ask if our curriculums are “public,” if they “embrace the difficult questions of the day,” or whether we instead allow music instruction to define the scope of our programs (p. 48). The authors tell the inspiring story of Jane Addams, a woman who noticed inequities in the lives of the working poor in inner-city Chicago in the late 1800’s, became outraged that this was perceived as “normal” by the rest of the community, and took action against these injustices. She developed the Hull House, a settlement for immigrants and people living in poverty, which eventually blossomed into a kindergarten, community art and music school, and community college (p. 48). This story shows that justice starts with noticing injustice, as stated by many previously mentioned authors, becoming outraged by the injustice, and then acting to create justice. The authors of this article urge music educators to reject the injustices that have become norms in our field and in our society

and act towards the way we think things *should* be. The authors close the article with a passionate call to music educators:

The moment we accept that music teaching is more than the teaching of sound and sound patterns alone – that there is something non-neutral about music that requires our moral engagement – we enter into the realm of a public pedagogy. It is a calling that is apparent in the project of public education, an education for our public spaces, or living together. As teachers, the big questions of our time do belong to us, and to our students as well. They are not to be left for others to decide, and we cannot respond to them until we accept the call to move from our isolated classrooms and sealed traditions, and into a public space. (p. 51)

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to explore the inner-workings of a band program that epitomizes music education for social justice and to reveal the impacts this type of program has on students and community members. Three research questions guided this study:

1. What motivated a teacher to develop this type of band program?
2. What does a music program based on principles of social justice look like?
3. What impact does this type of band program have on the students and community members involved?

If the field of music education is moving in a direction of social justice, we must identify music programs that are currently practicing these ideals so we can learn from their successes and failures. Ron is directing a band program that brings many of the previously referenced philosophies into practice. Therefore, a study of the North Park Middle School Band program has much to add to the developing phenomenon of music education for social justice.



## **Organization**

The organizational structure of this paper is as follows: Chapter Two discusses the results of research questions one and two. The chapter documents aspects of Ron Wakefield's life, the current structure of the North Park Band, and the historical development of the program. Chapter Three explores the third research question: the impact the program has on students with regard to development of responsibility, musical skills and knowledge, compassion, and using music to help others. The third chapter also discusses the ways in which the program has an influence on the community and gives a detailed account of how Ron cultivates his three teaching goals through a description of post-concert discussions. Chapter Four explores what the data revealed. The chapter concludes the debate about whether the North Park students are receiving a music education or something else. An interpretation of Ron's teaching style is included, which gives a more detailed account of how Ron accomplishes his goals. The chapter also contains recommendations for K-12 and higher education teachers and discusses areas where further research is necessary. The paper concludes with final thoughts about the implications this study has for the future of music education.

## **HISTORICAL ACCOUNT OF NORTH PARK BAND AND ITS DIRECTOR**

This chapter describes Ron Wakefield's personal transition from performer to teacher. In addition, the current structural and logistical aspects of the North Park Band program, as well as the 23-year development of the program under Ron's direction are also described.

### **Introduction to the North Park Middle School Band**

The North Park Middle School is located in Pico Rivera, California, a small suburb on the southeastern side of Los Angeles. According to 2010 census information, approximately 91% of the population is Hispanic or Latino, the median household income is approximately \$57,000 and approximately 25% of families are single parent families (<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/06/0656924lk.html>). Upon an initial stroll through the campus, the run-down conditions of the buildings and the outdated resources in the classrooms made it obvious that the school was not well-funded. However, street signs delineating the different corridors with names such as "Respect Way" and "Character Lane," as well as handmade posters advertising school activities and fundraisers suggested that the North Park community possessed pride and character.

In the summer of 2012, I met Ron Wakefield at the College Band Directors National Association (CBDNA) Band Education Symposium, held at ASU. As a graduate assistant at ASU, I played a role in the organization and execution of this symposium and found out about Ron during this planning. Instantly intrigued by what he was doing with his program, I read the only three pieces I found online about his program

<http://articles.latimes.com/2007/may/29/local/me-carnegie29>;  
[http://npms.erusd.org/apps/pages/index.jsp?uREC\\_ID=259353&type=u](http://npms.erusd.org/apps/pages/index.jsp?uREC_ID=259353&type=u);  
[http://www.oakland.edu/upload/docs/CARMU/%20CARMU%202007\\_program.pdf](http://www.oakland.edu/upload/docs/CARMU/%20CARMU%202007_program.pdf)).

My first visit to North Park was mid-November, 2012. It was the week of Veterans Day and the culmination of the band's Veterans project was underway: a social outreach concert at the Los Angeles Veterans Healthcare Facility. I walked into the band room and was taken aback. There was an outdated computer on a desk and a wobbly table with a swivel chair at the front of the room. Old brass and percussion instruments were tucked away in corners and in practice rooms. In fact, Ron did not even have a computer in his office; instead, a word processor is used to type communications with parents. Nothing in the room gleamed or sparkled with newness or cleanliness. I had read about Ron and his students getting rid of their trophies years ago when they stopped competing. But in that instant, I realized I had never been in a band room that did not have trophies shimmering in cases and plaques hanging on walls. As a public school band teacher, I taught in a newly built school that had state-of-the-art performing facilities, rehearsal rooms, and music technology classrooms. I wondered how the North Park Band program could be successful without the luxuries I was used to having.

Taking a closer look at the room I saw three beautifully framed and professionally matted photographs of the band on stage at Carnegie Hall. Other photographs hung nearby depicting young students posing in tuxedos and black gowns and holding plastic recorders. Labels such as "Brooklyn," "Harlem," "Maryvale," and "Shriners Children's

Hospital of Philadelphia” were handwritten on the mats and each child’s first name was written above their picture. There was a huge handmade banner in the back of the room that said, “Welcome back Jolene!” I had an idea of what all these objects were referring to, but their significance was yet to be revealed.

I sat down with Ron at the wobbly table and soon the students began to enter. Almost every student noticed the stranger at the front of the room and walked straight to me. These students did not introduce themselves in a way that my experience as a middle school teacher has led me to believe is typical. Most of them looked deep into my eyes and with a firm handshake said something along the lines of, “Welcome to North Park. Thank you for coming. We are so glad to have you here with us.” These kids were very mature for their age and they seemed to genuinely care that I was there. With no direction from a teacher, the students proceeded to sit down and take out their instruments. The school day had not officially begun yet – there were about 30 minutes remaining before the first bell.

As more students entered the room they formed pairs and it became clear that there was a “teacher” and a “student” in each pair. I walked around and noticed the teachers were consistent in their methods of instruction. The teacher counted off the student, clapped the beat while the student played the example from the book, and upon completion, a successful student received congratulations. Several students made mistakes and the teachers tried to explain a musical concept that was not understood. I desperately wanted to approach these student/teacher pairs and say, “Oh, just explain it like this and

it'll be easy!" But since Ron was not mentoring his students, I figured I should follow his lead. I had to let go of my innate sense of wanting to control a band room and just allow the students work it out on their own.

Based on our initial meetings, I would have never guessed that many of Ron's students come from tough or even abusive households. As I sat in the band room and heard police sirens go by on the street, I wondered why the students all shouted, "The donuts are ready!" Later in the day Ron explained that when he was first teaching in this school 23 years ago, he noticed that the students got uncomfortable every time they heard sirens. He quickly realized that this discomfort stemmed from fear. The students were afraid that those sirens were going to their house or attending to another drive-by shooting, possibly involving someone in their own family. Therefore, Ron came up with a joke that always gets the kids laughing rather than worrying. He told them that the sirens must mean that donuts are ready and the policemen are racing through the streets to get fresh donuts. Worry and fear were replaced by joyful children cheering, "The donuts are ready!"

Based on the few articles online and the presentations I saw Ron give at the CBDNA Band Education Symposium, I knew that this band was doing things that were uncommon. Some of their projects include playing for and teaching music to disadvantaged children in the community. They also perform for people in assisted living centers, nursing homes, Veterans Homes, and homeless shelters. Ron's students performed four times at Carnegie Hall and brought homeless children to play with them

on that iconic stage. But I did not know how it all got to be this way. I asked Ron to tell me the story of his personal journey and the history of the band from the time that he became the director.

### **Ron Wakefield's Transition from Performer to Teacher**

Ron never intended to be a teacher. As a young man, he dreamed of becoming a professional clarinetist. While a student at the University of South California (USC) he played as a freelance musician, and eventually “broke into the Hollywood TV studios.” He decided to specialize on the bass clarinet, which led him to commission music for the instrument from composers throughout the world.

The biggest commission was a major one, a bass clarinet concerto by Ian Krauss, who is now head of music composition at UCLA. And I was able to get the USC Symphony to do the world premier of that in order to commission the work. Later the Chicago Symphony played it, not with me...I contacted composers from many other countries. Really interesting music came in from Japan, really interesting. And some interesting pieces from Australia. So I gave many world premiers and I was very much a part of the chamber music scene in L.A. and soloing and doing recitals up and down California at universities and demonstrating what the bass clarinet was capable of doing. I was making it pretty good as a professional clarinet player. (The complete transcription of Ron's interview can be found in Appendix A.)

Ron had a good friend and music partner, Joe Lawson, a USC grad and an accomplished composer and pianist. In the late 1980s the two of them toured Switzerland and Germany. They were honored to broadcast a recital of American music live over Swiss Radio. Ron pinpoints the beginning of his personal and professional transformation to a performance on that tour held in a Catholic church:

It was a very life changing moment to play that concert. I was *not* Catholic at the time, and I was back there in this church in rooms I didn't understand. But now I know the green room was what would be called the sacristy. I was finished

playing and the rest went out to play the final piece of music, and there I was by myself back there. And there was a staircase. And I thought, “Hmmm, maybe I’ll go exploring instead of just sit there,” ya know, [he laughed] “What do I do?” So I walked up this staircase and found myself in a small room; I now understand this was another chapel, but a private chapel, not one for the public. I’ll sound like a crazy person right now, but I sat down, just to rest, and then um, it was like my heart began to scream, “YOU MADE IT! You’re a PROFESSIONAL clarinet player, you’re doing really well, oh yeah.” And then my heart said, “Now go teach, now become a teacher.” And I was like, “Wait a minute, hey, my career is going really well.” And my heart was still just screaming, “Go be a teacher, go be a teacher.” So um, it didn’t rest well with me at first. I had to absorb that, ya know.

Ron kept this experience to himself for the time being and he and Joe traveled to Rome. Joe was not a religious man either, but he wanted to show Ron the Pieta, the Michaelangelo statue of the Virgin Mary holding the body of Christ after they took him off the cross. The statue, for reasons unknown to him, transfixed Ron and Joe had to literally pull him away. After this experience, Ron and Joe separated for a few days and when the friends reconvened in Switzerland, Ron confessed his thoughts to Joe:

It was about time to go home and I said, “Joe, this is it.” And he said, “What do you mean this is it?” And I said, “I’ve decided to become a teacher.” And he goes, “WHAT?! [Ron laughed loudly] Your career’s goin’ great!” And I said, “I know but I just have this stirring in my heart that I, that I want to become a teacher.” And he’s a great friend, ya know, and he said, “Well why?” And I said, “I can’t really pinpoint it. I don’t understand it, but I think that there are a lot of troubled kids out there that are in need and I just have this feeling that if I were a teacher maybe I could make a difference with the children in some way.”

Seven years after he had finished his undergraduate degree, Ron went back to school to get his teaching credentials. As Ron entered the teaching profession, he began the process of “letting go little by little” of his professional gigs. He explained this process to me and also told me about some of the more personal reasons that led him to want to help children:

I continued to play professionally while I began teaching to a point, ya know, letting go little by little [he says with a wink and a nod] for the first three or four years of teaching. I kept some gigs for a few years, but basically I just released things, gave it away to other people, backed out of the TV stuff, and I didn't accept any solo things, nothing. I wanted to be a teacher. And you know, you can't be true to yourself if you aren't true to your heart. And I was a really abused child also, and I've never forgotten how it feels to be physically pounded on and kicked by my father, and to see the blood of my siblings on the walls of our house, and our mother. I don't forget that, and there's a lot of that right here in Pico Rivera, so many of these kids just get beat to a pulp by their parents. And I never forgot that so I just felt like it was a calling...Now I was going to go back to see if I could be the person that's there for those that are in that same situation.

### **Current Structure of the Band Program**

The following section describes the structure of the North Park Band in relation to the number of bands in the program, scheduling, auditions, performance opportunities, instrumentation, summer band, and finances. This section also introduces Ron's three teaching goals and describes the cornerstones of the band program: Social Outreach, Cultural Outreach, and *Kids Helping Kids*.

#### **Number and Scheduling of Bands**

Within grades six through eight, there are currently four separate bands in the North Park Band program. Scheduling at the middle school does not dictate which band the students must be placed in, so students in different grade levels are easily mixed. Many students take part in the summer band program prior to their sixth-grade year. The majority of those students are enrolled in the Beginning Band in the fall. Those students who are unable to participate in summer band still have the opportunity to join the band in the fall. Ron observes student progress throughout the summer and those sixth-grade students who improve at an exceptional rate, as well as older students who have fallen



behind, are enrolled in the Intermediate Band. The Advanced Band is comprised of mostly seventh-grade students, while there are a few eighth-grade students who have not progressed far enough on their instrument or in their maturity levels. The Honor Band contains the most advanced seventh- and eighth-grade students. Each band meets for an average of 40 minutes Monday through Friday. There are no small group “pull-out” lessons during the school day, however many students come in before school to practice and to receive lessons from their older peers.

### **Auditions**

Students do not audition for any of the bands, nor does Ron hold seating auditions. Placement is based on Ron’s observations of playing ability and maturity level. Rather than having seating auditions, Ron divides each section into groups. He spoke to me about his beliefs on this subject:

Chair challenges break up friendships. I knew something was wrong with that. I’ve always known. And I remember being treated unfairly in seventh-grade. And, I haven’t forgotten...the memory lasts forever. I’ve always known something was wrong, but it’s the way everyone does it! [Many teachers have] first clarinet, second and whoever’s in third clarinets is in third clarinet the whole year! And maybe for their entire high school career! I mean they don’t *need* to play above the break! And of course they don’t work real hard and they don’t see any hope and they don’t know better and they’re content. And they’re still enjoying music, but in my opinion not having a very high esteem for what they’re doing.

Based on observations of his students, Ron divides the groups so that they have even amounts of strong and weak players. He rotates these groups so that all players will have a chance to play all parts throughout the year.

## **Performance Opportunities**

Most of the performances throughout the school year are social and cultural outreach events. The Honor Band performs the majority of the social outreach concerts while the Advanced Band eases gradually into that process. Although the Honor and Advanced Bands perform many concerts, these performances typically happen outside of the school day and the students rarely miss school. The middle school schedule designates every other Wednesday as a half-day of school; Ron takes advantage of these afternoons to perform outreach concerts or to have parade rehearsals. All students participate in many of the parades, but younger students might carry flags rather than play instruments. The students also perform multiple potluck concerts for families, friends, and teachers. Families gather at the North Park Middle School cafetorium with a dish to pass as they share a meal together before watching the concert. While each band has many performances throughout the year, the Honor Band has the most. Between the outreach concerts, potluck concerts, and cultural parades, the Honor Band had 12 different performances in the fall of 2012.

## **Instrumentation**

Ron does not use standard instrumentation in his bands because of logistical and financial reasons. Instruments such as horns, bassoons, and oboes are too expensive to purchase and to maintain so he does without them. Instead of playing trumpets, students play cornets. Ron believes young students are able to produce a warmer tone on the cornet more easily than on the trumpet. The concert bands play without a percussion

section because large percussion instruments are difficult to transport to outreach venues. However, Ron selects students who are strong rhythmically to form a drumline for parades. If a particular piece of concert music involves a percussion feature that is especially important, Ron assigns that part to one of the other instrumentalists. A student who is assigned to a percussion part is also responsible for making sure the instrument arrives at the performance site. The instrumentation Ron chooses to use is financially feasible for the program and makes the process of going into and out of each venue more efficient.

### **Summer Band**

The six-week summer band program maintains a schedule similar to the structure used during the school year. Band rehearsals for the Beginning and Intermediate Bands consist of private student instruction. These students are paired with a mentor from the Advanced or Honor Band and are taught private lessons throughout the summer. Ron guides group instruction at the beginning of the summer and gradually allows the student teachers to have the majority of the teaching responsibility. The method of instruction amongst the teachers is consistent. They clap to keep the beat, count off the music according to the time signature, observe their student's performance, and respond to the successes or failures of the student. The younger students work through a standard band method book and receive stickers or other awards from their teachers as they successfully pass through each song. At times there are as many as 30 student-teacher pairs having private lessons simultaneously in the band room. Only the Honor and Advanced Bands

perform summer outreach concerts, however all of the students participate in parades and in the potluck dinner concert that ends the season.

### **Finances and Fundraising**

The students and parents of the band program are involved in many fundraising activities throughout the year. The parent booster organization oversees separate accounts for band students, outreach activities, and performance tours. For parade activities, students pay a \$100 "Fair Share" fee that goes into the band student account. There is no pressure on families to pay the money; those who cannot afford to pay still participate. For performance tours, students pay approximately 75% of the cost and fundraise the rest. Tours are optional and children with genuine need are sponsored. Students are responsible for all of the fundraising for outreach activities. They sell cupcakes, popcorn, and water at school everyday. This money is used to purchase band instruments or recorders for children involved in the outreach programs and to pay for costs associated with having those children join the band in concerts, parades, and on tours.

The program earns money at the many potluck concerts held throughout the year. Each family brings a dish to pass and each person must pay 50¢ to eat. These concerts typically raise \$500. Twice a year, the potluck concerts also involve raffle prizes. Ron, the students, and their families get big-ticket prizes donated from local business and sell raffle tickets to members of the community for one dollar. The band earns approximately \$4,000 a year from raffle ticket sales.

## **Ron's Teaching Goals**

Coming from a background in competitive band programs, I understand educational objectives based on performance standards. I was curious to know if Ron had teaching objectives based on principles of social justice. I asked him this and he took a piece of paper off of his desk and handed it to me. Three teaching objectives were typed on the piece of paper:

1. To enhance the moral foundation of every student;
2. To awaken a sense of life purpose; and
3. To call every heart to a higher sense of unselfish love.

With regards to the first goal, Ron says that “enhance” is the important word. He knows that there are good families and community members who help create a strong foundation of morals in children; he sees it as one of his jobs to enhance that foundation. He hopes that his students gain a strong sense of right and wrong to fall back on as they traverse through the trials of life.

The second goal, to awaken a sense of life purpose, is something that Ron believes some people never achieve in their lifetime. As the students graduate from middle school and enter a high school that has a high percentage of gang members and teen pregnancies, he hopes that a strong sense of life purpose within each student will help them to achieve success in school and in life.

Ron's third teaching goal is to call every heart to a higher sense of unselfish love. Through reaching out to the local community, gaining an understanding of different

cultures, and helping other children achieve success, Ron teaches his students to think of others before they think of themselves.

I clearly see that kids who've moved on *do* feel they know that there is something special that they can do. People want to make a difference but they don't know how...I'm using music right now for them to make a difference right now at this time in their lives. But they have other interests and they will do other things, and I hope that they will use the practice that we have in making a difference and put that to use with whatever else they're going to do. So that's why I teach them "You go out and use your God-given gifts and talents for the good of others."

### **Social Outreach**

The social outreach component involves a busy schedule with concerts primarily given by the Honor Band. The band performs at homeless shelters, children's hospitals, facilities for abused children, nursing homes, assisted living centers, Veterans Homes, and other facilities where people are in need. Following every performance, the band members spend 30 to 60 minutes visiting with their audience. In the fall semester of 2012, the Honor Band performed seven outreach concerts. Ron treats the students in the Advanced Band as if they are in training to be in the Honor Band; they only participate in about 50% of the outreach concerts.

I was able to observe three different social outreach performances that shared the same structure and format. Ron feels that one of the most important and meaningful components of these concerts is that they are interactive. For example, in *Concerto for Pots and Pans* by Michael Story, students involve the audience by passing out toy instruments so they can participate. They distribute lyrics to songs so that the audience can sing along, or they ask audience members to clap along. The next phase of interaction

happens at the conclusion of the concert. The students put their instruments away before splitting up into small groups to visit with the audience. They share stories, tell jokes, and many times students are inspired to sing or retrieve their instruments to play another song for an individual audience member.

Another unique facet of the outreach concerts is that they are entirely run by the students. Once the busses arrive at the venue, the students are in charge of everything. Group leaders are assigned to walk the students to the performance site. Sometimes these group leaders are even in charge of signing the group into the facility. Group leaders show the students where they will be playing and where to put their instrument cases. Once the students are set up, group leaders make sure everyone is ready and gesture for the first student conductor to step forward. The conductor introduces the ensemble to the audience and opens the program by conducting the first piece. A different student conducts each piece that follows. The students are in charge of passing out the toy instruments or song lyrics at the appropriate time in the concert. When the band finishes its last piece, the final student conductor announces to the audience that they will now visit with each person. When the flurry of conversation comes to an end, Ron tells the students that it is time to head back to the busses. The students travel back to North Park where parents are waiting with a freshly cooked barbecue dinner. Dinner is followed by a group discussion in the band room where students share different stories and lessons learned from their audience members. Ron prompts them with questions that require students to ponder the meaning of what they just accomplished. Chapter three includes a

detailed observation of a social outreach concert and provides specific information related to the preparation and structure of the event.

### **Cultural Outreach**

For the Cultural Outreach portion of the curriculum, the band students participate in various cultural parades. Ron selects different parades every year based on location, scheduling, and the culture being celebrated. He has gradually removed all forms of competition from the program throughout the years; however, because of the rich American marching band tradition, Ron feels parades are still a vital part of the program. Instead of competing at these events, Ron uses parades as an opportunity to gain a better understanding of a specific culture. All of the North Park Bands participate in the parades. Student who are too young or inexperienced to play and march carry a flag or the North Park Band banner.

In preparation for a Korean parade, the students split into groups and selected a specific topic of Korean culture to research and present to the class. Students examined aspects of the culture ranging from food and clothing to language and music. They had lunch at a Korean restaurant and Ron made sure all took advantage of the opportunity to use chopsticks. At the parade, the seventh- and eighth-grade students played the Korean national anthem while younger students lined the sides of the band carrying Korean flags.

This year, Ron used the Veterans Day Parade as an opportunity to go beyond the students' typical parade preparation by including a social outreach trip to the Los Angeles Veterans Healthcare Facility. Students learned about different wars in American



history and were split into groups with the assignment of interviewing a local veteran.

The groups presented stories to the class about “their” veteran and the war he or she was involved with.

### **Kids Helping Kids**

The *Kids Helping Kids* program was born during a 2004 spring Honor Band performance at the Isaiah House, a homeless shelter for women and children. At that concert, a homeless child named Tiffany approached Ron saying she would give anything to do what his kids were doing. Ron bought a clarinet for her and began going to the Isaiah House to teach her lessons. When other children at the Isaiah House showed interest, Ron bought them instruments and brought North Park students with him after school to teach lessons. The program has grown to include many other facilities and at different points throughout the past nine years, North Park students have taught instruments to children in children’s hospitals, centers for abused children, and homeless shelters. Administrative changes and other variables have caused Ron and his students to stop going to some locations, while new opportunities have opened up through the years at other facilities. In the 2012-2013 school year, North Park students taught lessons to children at the Children’s Institute, Inc., a facility for abused children. These children are invited to join the North Park Band students in parades and concerts. Not only do the North Park students teach these children lessons, the students are in control of the fundraising efforts necessary to purchase the instruments and sustain these projects.

Currently Ron is setting up an outreach program at an orphanage in Cueraivaca, Mexico. A former student lives in the vicinity of the orphanage and is helping him get the program started. She visits the students weekly while Ron travels to Mexico once a month to facilitate progress. Ron's goal is that the North Park students will be able to teach lessons to the children in the Mexican orphanage by way of the Internet.

### **The History of the North Park Band**

When Ron took the position as director of the North Park Middle School Band in 1990, the school and the band program were in bad shape. Gangs ran the school, there was graffiti everywhere, and Ron felt scared to walk from the band room to the office by himself. The school budget had been cut so much that there were no sports or activities for students to participate in. Ron began to develop the band program, little by little, from a complete state of disarray into what it has become today.

The district worked hard to improve the school during the 1990s. Ron "won't take one ounce of credit for cleaning up the school" however, he certainly deserves credit for turning the band program around. He had 18 students in the band in the fall of 1990, but by the spring he had many more. They went to a concert festival that spring and received one superior and two excellent ratings from the three judges. North Park never received any score other than superior from that point forward. This was the beginning of a new path for the students and the families at North Park Middle School – they finally had something to be proud of. Ron spoke of the early years and how the band developed to be the first middle school band to ever march in the Rose Parade as well as perform at

Carnegie Hall's National Band and Orchestra Festival. He told me the story of the bus ride home from that first concert festival in 1990:

I bought all the kids a little medal. And we were on the bus coming back, and the kids were so proud, and someone in the back of the bus screamed out, "Give me an N!" and all the kids screamed back, "N!" And he shouted, "Give me an O!" and tears filled up in everyone's eyes and they realized they were cheering finally for North Park Middle School. There had been no reason for many years since they cut out football and everything, and they were cheering for their school! Very emotional, and of course I had them in the palm of my hand by then, because they wanted more.

News of the successful endeavors of the North Park Band spread quickly and at the beginning of Ron's fourth year as director, he was nominated for the Disney American Teacher Awards. He became a national finalist and Disney paid for the entire band to travel to Disney World. The Disney Awards staff made a small film about the North Park Band and it was shown at the awards presentation. The film culminated with the band marching through Disney World as the actual North Park Band marched down the aisles of the theater. Ron did not end up winning the award that year; he was the runner up.

Looking back, I'm so grateful that I didn't win because I've had my time of struggling with ego. And I'm so grateful of course that we got that opportunity, but also that I didn't win that national award because, well I don't know what would have become of me. I don't think, I don't know, I mean I would have just thought too highly of myself and um, been out of control. I'm really grateful it worked out the way it did.

After the Disney American Teacher Awards, Ron continued to build the concert and marching programs. In the concert band setting, his students were playing pieces like *Hymnsong* by Phillip Bliss, Charles Carter's *Overture for Winds*, and Frank Erickson's *Toccata for Band*. In the marching venue, Ron consistently applied for the Rose Parade

but was rejected year after year as they told him that middle school bands were not allowed. However the 1997 Rose Parade president, Mr. William Johnstone, had seen the North Park Band on the Disney American Teacher Awards. He contacted Ron about the possibility of North Park performing in the parade.

The parade committee was still skeptical about a middle school band marching in the event, so they made an appointment to come visit North Park. Ron told his students, “This is *biigg*. Middle schools never, ever played the Rose Parade and this would be huge for our city. Just really big, and you guys would make history in marching band if you would get this!” Ron and his students came up with a plan that involved cleaning every inch of the band room, painting a big picture that said “Welcome Tournament of Roses,” and dressing in full uniform so that when the committee entered the room the band would be standing at attention in uniform to greet them. They were “blown away” by this unexpected greeting, and after introductions were made, the students brought the committee outside to see them march.

There was a little girl who was only in fourth grade carrying a flag in the very back corner and her shoelace was untied. It was the only thing out of place [he laughed heartily]! And, they fell in love with the little girl with her shoelace untied. And so we came back into the room and of course they had marched fabulous and played fabulous. Well what happened was, was amazing. President Johnstone walked up to the front of the band and he said, “On behalf...” And that’s all he had to say, no one *heard* the rest of it [he laughed again]. The kids *screamed* and they started to cry and they leaped out of their chairs and they started hugging him, they mobbed him. Now I’m not gonna exaggerate, this mobbing and screaming and crying went on for more than an hour! I’m not exaggerating; it went on for more than an *hour*. It was that emotional. This was *Pico Rivera*, this kind of stuff didn’t happen here! And the noise was so loud people from the other side of campus were goin’ “Hey, what’s going on?” News spread quickly that a middle school was going to be in the *Rose* parade. And it was just an amazing energy, an

outpouring of love and gratitude that day that anyone in that room could never, never forget. And it was like ok, North Park Band is here.

The following year, his sixth year teaching at North Park, Ron had the highest quality concert and marching band yet. Ron's old friend, Joe Lawson, wrote a piece for the band that year entitled *Uhuru Peak*. Ron had been an avid mountain climber and quite often, when he went to climb mountains such as Mount Rainier, the Matterhorn, or Kilimanjaro, he would climb in honor of his students. The students would sign a document before he left for his climb and he would leave that document at the top of the mountain. Uhuru Peak is the peak of Mount Kilimanjaro, and Joe Lawson was so moved by the stories of Ron climbing for his students that he decided to write this piece for the band. The North Park Band had a recording session to record this new work as well as *The Chimes of Liberty* by Edwin Goldman.

The community was wondering what Ron was going to do next with the North Park Band. How could he top the Rose Parade? Ron joked with people that the only next step would be to take the band to Carnegie Hall. Soon he discovered the National Band Festival, a concert festival held at Carnegie Hall where high school bands can perform for and be evaluated by some of the world's top band conductors. He called to inquire about the possibility of North Park attending this festival and was told that the festival did not allow middle school bands to perform. Ron continued to call every few months, talking to the same person, and receiving the same answer every time. When Ron made the phone call one afternoon in December and asked for John, the man with whom he had spoken

every other time, he was told that John was at the Midwest Clinic, but they would be happy to give Ron his cell phone number.

And now I've got his cell number! And he answers the phone! So of course I called his cell number and I said, "Hi John, it's Ron Wakefield." And he said, "Ron, we're not going to have a middle school." And I said, "John you want me to stop bugging you don't you?" He goes, "Yes, we're not gonna let you in." And I go, "OK John, OK listen. I'll stop bugging you, but I want you to promise me one thing." And he goes, "ANYTHING!" [he laughed hysterically] I said, "Just let me send you a tape. And, and just give me your promise that you'll listen to it for one minute, just *one* minute and if you listen to it for one minute and you don't like it, call me and say never and I will never bother you again." Because you see, now we had this recording of *Uhuru Peak* and *The Chimes of Liberty*. He said, "You've got yourself a deal." I sent him the tape and he called back and said, "We'd like to invite you to Carnegie Hall!" And we've been friends ever since. So that was just huge. That was *bigger* than the Rose Parade.

In 2000 Ron took the North Park Band on their first trip to New York City to play at Carnegie Hall. They were the first middle school band ever accepted to participate in the National Band Festival and the performance was a huge success. Ron spoke of the children playing so beautifully that the audience was not only lost in the music, but also lost sight of the fact that middle-school-aged children were the ones performing. He said the moment was so magical that by the end of the performance, many in the audience and most of the band members were in tears. One of the adjudicators of the festival was the legendary band conductor Frank Battisti. Ron said that when the band left the stage following the performance "Battisti comes down and he piled on the compliments and he was hitting me with his cane on the shoulder and that was great. He was just really moved by middle school kids playing so deeply from the heart as they did, and so beautifully, and that it was very challenging music." Over the next four years, the band continued with

their tours. They went to Hawaii, on a Mexican cruise, to Canada, and returned to Disney World.

In 2004, Ron decided that it was time to go back to Carnegie Hall for another National Band Festival. He wanted to find a venue in the New York City area where the band could play in preparation for Carnegie Hall. Meanwhile, in his personal life, Ron was continuing to go through a transformation. Prior to this trip to New York, Ron had joined the Franciscan Order. He was on a deep spiritual journey, “and there was an openness I was beginning to develop which is what led me to this Cabrini Home.” He discovered the Cabrini Home, a home for orphaned and abandoned children, just outside of New York City. Many of the children in the home were orphaned as a result of the September 11<sup>th</sup> tragedy. Ron said, “My only intent, and I’m ashamed of that now, it wasn’t to reach out, it was to schedule a pre-Carnegie Hall performance.” But something unexpected happened at that concert and it turned out to be a life-changing event for Ron and for the future of the North Park Band.

The band played at the Cabrini Home and the staff there offered to serve cookies and punch following the concert so that the band could interact with children at the home. According to Ron, the students had such a meaningful experience bringing the joy of music to these abandoned children that this performance completely overshadowed the Carnegie Hall performance. Coincidentally, the professional photo that was taken of the band on stage at Carnegie Hall in 2004 came out so blurry that Ron did not even keep a

copy to hang on the wall of the band room. The memories of that trip were all about the experience at the Cabrini Home, not about Carnegie Hall.

Upon his return to Pico Rivera, Ron attended a Franciscan retreat and was in awe of the work being done by a married couple that was running a homeless shelter in Santa Ana, California, the Isaiah House. Ron explained that during the retreat he “felt like something was going on inside me, but I did not understand what it was, and I just remained quiet.” A few weeks later, Ron felt the urge to call the Isaiah House. Emily, one of the directors he had met at the retreat, gave Ron a tour of the home and introduced him to some of the people who lived there. She led him to the backyard and without a thought, he immediately blurted out, “How’d you like a band concert?” Emily was extremely enthusiastic about the idea, proclaiming that they had never had anything like *that* before. It was June and they made a plan to do a concert the following Christmas. Ron started asking Emily about other kinds of things they might be able to do to help at the home. Emily said she wished they had a better way of celebrating birthdays. Ron thought he would start taking some of his students out to the Isaiah House once a month to celebrate birthdays.

So I had this six-month period of time where we hadn’t performed at the Isaiah House yet, but I started taking kids to do these birthday celebrations. I’d just take a carload of kids over once a month to celebrate everyone that had a birthday that month and that just evolved. Like all things, I didn’t know what I was doing at first. Each person at the beginning got one present, but it grew into a thing where each person would get a lot of presents. And we had ice cream and we had a cake and we sang happy birthday one time to all of the people. And then of course it evolved to where we’d just walk around the yard and find whoever had a birthday and crowd around them and they got their individual birthday sang to them. Either way, it worked and it was wonderful. And that was our introduction to working with the homeless.



When it was time to take the band to the Isaiah House for the Christmas concert, the students were very excited because everyone had been hearing about the birthday celebrations at the home. The students played a number of Christmas carols and “a bunch of the homeless crowded in real close and they just started singing without us asking them to and it was really, really touching.” Between the experience at the Cabrini Home and these experiences at the Isaiah House, it became clear to Ron that the North Park Band was moving in a new direction.

When I initially learned about Ron and the North Park Band, I found a press release that spoke of Ron taking a group of homeless children with them to their third performance at Carnegie Hall. The article highlighted Tiffany, the homeless child who approached Ron at North Park’s second concert at the Isaiah House. She said, “I’d do anything if I could do what those kids are doing” (<http://articles.latimes.com/2007/may/29/local/me-carnegie29>). That statement led Ron to go from birthday celebrations at the Isaiah House to the beginning of his *Kids Helping Kids* program.

When Tiffany first approached Ron, he decided to buy her a clarinet and go to the Isaiah House once a week to teach her lessons. However, it was not long before many of the children at the Isaiah House wanted to learn an instrument. Out of his own funds, Ron purchased more instruments and began taking groups of students to the home to teach music to the homeless children.

A lot of kids came through that program. A lot of kids were not really long term homeless, but as soon as they’d get dropped off in a homeless shelter, then we’d

snatch them up and keep them busy playing music. So there were many, many homeless children. And I ended up supplying a lot of instruments, a lot of them out of my own pocket. And some of the kids would be there for three months or so and move on and I'd let them keep the instruments in hopes that wherever they would end up that they'd join a band program. Sometimes we'd hear back from them that they did! And sometimes we wouldn't hear back at all, but that's fine.

Ron started rotating his students so that they would all have a chance to teach, but this idea did not work very well. There were "too many cooks in the kitchen." He admitted more than once that he has made mistakes along the way and has learned from them.

My intentions were always good but I did make some mistakes. And one of them was that I tried to rotate all of the kids in as teachers. There was no continuity in the lessons then and the lessons were not going anywhere for a while. So I had to learn that I had to get a core of kids that are going to do it. Like now at CII (The Children's Institute, Inc.) each kid has three teachers. They have to communicate, but ya know, it could be ten in the past, and that just, that doesn't work. And even three is still a lot, it works better, it really works best if there's only one. But there's a lot of kids that want this and it depends on how many kids we have to teach.

A little band began to form with the small group of children receiving music lessons at the Isaiah House and when Ron decided to take North Park back to Carnegie Hall in 2007, he and his students thought they should bring the Isaiah House Band with them. Many people thought Ron was crazy to embark on this endeavor, but he knew it was possible and he believed his students felt it was important. Once the community understood what the band was going to do, "everyone was on board" and wanted to make it happen. "That was before the recession hit so fundraising was not difficult. People would just walk up and give me hundred dollar bills and they would tell me to put this towards the homeless kids." With the money raised, each homeless child was given casual

clothes, formal wear for the Carnegie Hall performance, luggage, and \$150 spending money.

Ron conveyed that this performance was particularly meaningful for the students in the band, the community of Pico Rivera, and for the homeless children. However, he had not told the adjudicators or the audience that his band included a group of homeless children. They each had a solo during the performance and “they were *scared* up there, but they played!” At this point in the development of the program, Ron was still doing all of the conducting. However, his gradual process of “letting go little by little” of the conducting began with this concert. “Remember the girl with the untied shoelace from our Rose Parade audition?” Lisa had been very influential in the development of the Isaiah House Band and Ron decided to let her conduct *Ave Maria* at Carnegie Hall.

Once they returned from their third trip to Carnegie Hall, Ron gradually expanded the *Kids Helping Kids* program to include children at the Los Angeles Shriner’s Hospital, Children’s Institute, Inc. and Maryvale. The Children’s Institute, Inc. is a non-profit organization specializing in the treatment and prevention of child abuse and neglect. Maryvale is a center for girls in extreme crisis. When I asked Ron if parents got nervous about their children going to either of these centers, he said no. Although Maryvale is a lockdown facility, it is for girls in crisis, not for criminals. These children had been raped or were victims of abuse in some way and had been taken out of their homes. Ron believes the parents felt secure knowing that he would always be there and the facility is

run by nuns. Ron thinks the parents knew their children were getting something really valuable out of the visits.

At this time the program was expanding to include many more children and unfortunately, the band instruments would often disappear from the homeless shelters. Recorders are less expensive to purchase and Ron felt the program would be just as successful if the children learned how to play the recorder instead of a band instrument.

As Ron began making initial preparations for a fourth trip to Carnegie Hall, a new idea came to him. He had been able to easily expand his program to different centers in the Los Angeles area, what if he could somehow reach different facilities on the East Coast? If he were successful, the North Park Band could have a group of disadvantaged children from the East Coast joining them on stage at Carnegie Hall.

Ron was sitting in the band room one afternoon when a former student, Beth, entered. She had gotten married and had a child and wanted to introduce Ron to her new family. She also told him that she had joined the Coast Guard and would soon be leaving for Baltimore. Ron told her about his idea for their next trip to Carnegie Hall and that he was going to need people on the East Coast who could teach recorder lessons. Beth immediately responded by asking, "Can I do it?" Ron realized this was how he could execute the new plan.

Beth moved to Baltimore and went into housing projects to find children that wanted to learn to play the recorder. Ron showed me the picture hanging on the wall of the children from Baltimore and explained, "Those were the hardest core kids of all." He

recalled taking a trip out to check on how things were going with Beth and her new students. They used a room in a local Boys & Girls Club for their lessons and when Ron arrived to visit, he heard Beth saying, “Mr. Wakefield is gonna be here soon! We’ve got to impress him! Come on now, on the edge of your chair, get your feet flat on the floor, long-tones, ready? 1, 2, 3, 4…” Beth was only 21 at the time, but she raised enough money to take these children on a three-day trip to New York City where they would join the North Park Band.

Ron also contacted the New York State School Music Association (NYSSMA) requesting that they send an email blast to all New York State teachers trying to garner more interest in the project. He heard back from one teacher in Brooklyn who was an elementary school teacher “but he knew a little about music and just had the right heart to do this.” Ron also heard from a teacher in Harlem who was an elementary general music teacher. He “pointed them both in the right direction” and spent many weekends traveling to New York to facilitate the two programs.

As the date of the Carnegie Hall performance drew closer, Ron decided he should find a location to bring everyone together for a performance before they took the stage at Carnegie Hall. This idea was similar to the one that led his band to perform at the Cabrini Home, except this time Ron intended for the concert to be an outreach event. Since his North Park students were already teaching children in the Los Angeles Shriner’s Hospital, he decided to contact the Philadelphia Shriner’s Hospital for this concert. Philadelphia was a perfect location for the Baltimore children to meet up with the North Park students

and the children from Harlem and Brooklyn. Now the disadvantaged children in these programs would also have a chance to do an outreach concert.

When Ron told the Philadelphia Shriner's Hospital director what he was doing and where these various children were coming in from, she was astounded and wished that the children in her hospital could have a similar experience. Ron jumped at the opportunity and asked Beth if she would be interested in commuting to Philadelphia to teach children at the hospital. She agreed and they added one more group of children to join the North Park Band on stage at Carnegie Hall.

Ron spent many weekends traveling to the East Coast in the months prior to the Carnegie Hall performance in April. On his last visit to the Shriner's Hospital he met a young lady named Jolene, who had been a victim of the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, and had been flown to the Philadelphia Shriner's Hospital for care.

We worked with the hospital kids there, but there we were and this Haitian girl in a wheelchair with only one leg, who couldn't speak English, wheels herself up with this big smile and stops in front of me. She just knew, she knew, "I'm goin' to that dude. I'm gonna go say hi. I can't talk to him but I wanna know him." That's what's goin on in her head, and she had no idea who I was. But so I tried to talk to her ya know, "What's your name?" And she goes "Jolene" and so I got the directors and said, "Who is this girl? What's goin' on here?" And then they told me, ya know, and I looked down, and she's missing a leg. She had been crushed by a building, left for dead, for several days. Her mother thought she was dead, and her mother cried and cried. But they finally, when they lifted some of the rubble up there, she was breathing. And the Philly hospital was the only place where there was a hospital bed.

Ron began to teach Jolene the recorder and she caught on very quickly. He knew she had to join them on the stage of Carnegie Hall. The directors of the hospital were thrilled with the idea but knew, "there is so much red tape to prevent us from letting her

do that.” Ron said, “Just do whatever it takes. I’ll pay whatever, I’ll do whatever, just get it done, she’s gotta go!” Ron returned to Pico Rivera and within two weeks he got a phone call from Philadelphia saying that Jolene had the green light to join them on the trip to Carnegie Hall.

For their fourth performance at Carnegie Hall, the North Park Band was joined by the East Coast children from Baltimore, Harlem and Brooklyn, and the Shriner’s Hospital in Philadelphia, including Jolene, their representative from the Republic of Haiti. From the West Coast, the band brought students from the Isaiah House, the Maryvale Center for Abused Girls, and the Children’s Institute, Inc. Ron knew that unlike the last Carnegie Hall performance, this time he needed to let the audience and the adjudicators know exactly what was taking place on stage. The director of the festival announced the various locations these children had come from and “extended a thank you to the directors and the representatives from each place.” Ron also sent a personal note to the adjudicators explaining why and how all these children were joining the North Park Band. Following their performance, Frank Battisti again went looking for Ron backstage and in Ron’s words, “He swore that he would spend the rest of his life promoting the cause of social justice in music education.” Battisti called Gary Hill, Director of Instrumental Ensembles (and my conducting professor) at ASU, to tell him that he was not too far away from Ron geographically and that he should meet him. Professor Hill called Ron and the two developed a friendship that eventually led me to meet Ron when he presented at the CBDNA Band Education Symposium at ASU in the summer of 2012.

## **Summary**

Ron Wakefield and the North Park Band program have gone through significant changes since Ron took over the program in 1990. This chapter encompassed a detailed picture of what the program looks like today and the history behind its making. Because Ron's personal story of transformation has had an impact on the band program, it is important to understand the life events that led him from performer to teacher. Over the last 23 years, the North Park Band program has gradually progressed from a highly competitive organization to one whose sole purpose is to educate students by helping others through music. While this chapter presented a historical view, the next chapter discusses the impact this type of program has on the students involved.



## **IMPACT OF PROGRAM**

This chapter discusses the impact the band program has on the people involved. I was able to comprehend the impact by observing student behavior in class and at various outreach performances, reading practice journals, and interviewing various students and parents. I also observed the audience members during and after the performances at three different outreach concerts. The students take on a large amount of responsibility for the implementation and execution of each facet of the program; consequently, a description of the Veterans Outreach Concerts is included in the chapter to highlight the various ways tasks are delegated to the students. Additionally, student responsibility with regards to fundraising is outlined. This chapter includes a description of the musical instruction Ron gives to his students and also highlights the data that reveal the development of compassion and understanding in the students through their activities with the band. The students' beliefs that they are using music to help others are discussed in this chapter as well as the impact the program is having on the community. The final portion of the chapter highlights the impact that Ron's three teaching goals (1. to enhance the moral foundation of every student, 2. to awaken a sense of life purpose, 3. to call every heart to a higher sense of unselfish love) are having on the students.

### **Student Responsibility**

In the weeks I spent with the North Park Band, the students took on an unusually high degree of responsibility for the program. Both the Honor Band and the Advanced Band participated in the Veterans Outreach Concerts and these students accepted specific

responsibilities for the execution of their event. This section also includes a description of the student responsibilities involved with fundraising.

### **The Veterans Outreach Concerts**

On the day prior to the Veterans Concerts, Ron provided a lot of guidance to his students in order to set them up for success. The band rehearsal consisted of a dress rehearsal, which was run by the students. The following procedure was incorporated into each of the two bands' rehearsals: the students entered the room, got their instruments and music out and quietly sat in their seats. On the whiteboard at the front of the room, there was a program list for each band with different student names next to each piece. Without receiving instructions from Ron, many of the students copied the list and the names onto a piece of paper. Upon Ron's direction, "OK, run your show!" the students began their dress rehearsal. One student came to the front of the room, took the baton off of Ron's table, and began running the band through a set of long-tone warm-up exercises.

Following the warm-up exercises, Ron gestured to the whiteboard and told the students that they knew what to do next. One by one, different students conducted their piece of music. Quite often, the pieces involved a soloist or a duet. Each conductor waited for the group to be ready and made eye contact with the soloist to make sure he or she was ready. At that point, the conductor turned around and announced his or her name, the title of the piece, and the soloist. Ron gave the most instruction during these times of public speaking, often teaching the students to speak louder and slower. "Remember,

most of these people will have hearing aids! You've got to speak *loudly*! You want them to hear you even if their hearing aid falls on the floor!"

Although there were some points when the logistics of the dress rehearsal were not flowing perfectly, Ron remained silent and allowed the students to work out these issues on their own. Many times I witnessed students working together through any confusion that arose throughout the course of the rehearsal. Ron reviewed the logistics with the class to make sure they had everything covered. He reminded the students that they must have the concert order, with conductor and soloist names written down and in their binder, so they would know the order of the show. He assigned specific students to be in charge of bringing the sheets of song lyrics to pass out to the audience, others were assigned to take the crate of toy instruments to pass out, some were in charge of making sure there were enough music stands and a few were responsible for taking various percussion instruments. Ron gave specific instructions for these tasks. For example, he spoke to the student in charge of the toy instruments:

You are going to take this crate of toy instruments. Make sure you bring it with you out of this room, put it on the equipment truck, get it *off* of the truck, bring it to the performance site, pick two partners to help you pass out the instruments during the concert, collect the toy instruments after the concert, get the crate back onto to the truck, and when we walk back into this room tomorrow night, the first thing you will do is put that crate right back here on my table. Don't forget any of those steps! Write them down if you think you need to.

Ron also spoke to the students about what they should expect from their audiences. The Honor Band would perform at the Veterans Nursing Home while the Advanced Band would perform at the Veterans Assisted Living Center. He told the

Advanced Band to expect to see some people in wheelchairs and that many people would be very old, but in general the students would be able to easily carry on conversations with those residents after the performance. He told the Honor Band to expect a more intense situation, explaining that most of the residents would be in wheelchairs or even lying in beds. He warned them that some might be hooked up to machines and that many of them might not be able to communicate very well. Ron let the students know that even if the residents could not speak, they could still hear the students and they should not be afraid to continue talking even if they do not respond. A few different times he reminded the students that the residents for whom they would play are people too, but that they are just older people, like we all will be someday. Ron also made a point of telling the students that “these people are some of the loneliest people in the whole world” and that it will mean a lot to them to have the North Park Band come to visit them, show them they care, and thank them for their service to our country.

Ron assigned two members of each band to be the group leaders for the day of the concert. Again, he gave these four students a good deal of guidance the day before the concert so that on performance day, they would be successful without his assistance. Ron planned for the group leaders to travel with him to the Veterans Home after school to talk over and walk through all of the details. When school was over on the day preceding the performance, Ron and the four students went in his car and I followed as we drove out to the Los Angeles Veterans Healthcare Facility. Once we arrived, we got out of our cars and Ron explained that we were precisely where the busses would be dropping us off on the

following day. He began by coaching the leaders of the Advanced Band. We walked from the parking lot to the assisted living facility where the Advanced Band was going to perform. As we walked, Ron urged the students to notice where the building was in relation to the parking lot and to notice landmarks along the way. He would say things like, “Make sure you keep everyone on this sidewalk on the left. When you see that big flowerbed you will be sure that you are going in the right direction.” We got to the facility and Ron explained to the leaders that they should ask the band to wait outside while they check-in with the security guard. We walked inside, met the security guard, and I was again able to observe the maturity with which these students presented themselves to outsiders. They shook hands and made introductions with the security guard, explained who they were and that they would be performing tomorrow, and that they were here today to talk through the details with him. Following those introductions, the security guard led us to the large room where the band would perform. As we walked into the room, Ron asked the students where they thought the best place would be for the band to set up. The students decided that the front of the room would be the best because it provided the most space. Without Ron’s guidance, they walked into the space and conversed with each other about how many people were in each row of the band and if those rows would fit in that space. They decided it would work fine. We were about to leave when one of the students remembered that they also needed to find a place to put the instrument cases. The four students discussed this problem and found an area in the room that would be ideal for cases. We went through the same process with the Honor

Band group leaders, positioning ourselves back into the parking lot and going through the same routine for the Veterans Nursing Home. After the students felt confident and comfortable with all of the details for the following day, Ron treated us to burgers and milkshakes at his favorite diner. He assured me that I would have the best milkshake I have ever had in my life and he was right.

I was eager to watch the students take control of the program on the day of the concert. As we left the band room the students loaded the truck and got on the busses, Ron shouted out reminders, and we made sure the items that were supposed to have left the room had. After the last student walked out of the room he said, “There, now my job is over and I can just relax and enjoy the shows. The kids take it from here.” We arrived at the Veterans Home and before exiting the busses, Ron reminded the students that the group leaders were in charge now and they should listen to their instructions. I went with the Advanced Band, the younger of the two groups. The group leaders led the students on the walk towards the assisted living home and were extremely focused on trying to get everyone to be quiet. Although I was tempted to step in and say something to the group, or to give some advice to the leaders, I had observed that Ron would not do that, so I followed his lead.

The two group leaders never got the group completely quiet and a few minor arguments and power struggles developed, but nothing too serious. The leaders seemed exasperated, but left to check the group in and returned to herd the students into the performance room. They instructed everyone on where to leave their cases, and all

proceeded to work together to set up. Any fights that had developed outside stopped when the students entered the building. When the band was standing in place and seemed to be ready, the group leaders gave one final check to make sure everyone was ready, and told the first conductor to step forward and begin the show. Ron had initially gone with the Honor Band, but arrived in time to see the beginning of the Advanced Band concert. He and I watched the show for a while and then walked over to check on the Honor Band in the nursing home.

When we arrived in the nursing home, the students were in the middle of their concert. As Ron had informed the students, the Advanced Band was performing for residents who were highly independent while the Honor Band students were performing for residents sitting in wheelchairs or lying in beds. Many could not speak and some were hooked up to breathing machines or IVs. The students finished their concert, and consistent with the usual outreach program format, announced that next they would visit with the audience. They approached the residents with ease and before long there was a loud murmur of conversation and a lot of laughter and energy throughout the room. The Activity Director approached one of the student leaders to tell him that there were many residents who wanted to see their performance, but due to health reasons, could not come downstairs. She wondered if anyone would like to go up into the different levels of the nursing home to visit some of these residents in their rooms. The students had never done *that* before. They split themselves into groups of four and went upstairs. I witnessed the groups of students go into rooms and do different things depending on the condition of

the person. Because all the residents were veterans, the students decided they should play or sing patriotic songs such as *God Bless America* or *The Star Spangled Banner*.

Sometimes they felt instruments would be too loud for a resident, so they sang. Other times they found that a resident just wanted to talk, so they shared stories. After about thirty minutes, the group leaders gathered the students and led them back to the busses. When both bands reconvened at the busses, I noticed that the little arguments that had been developing before the Advanced Band concert had erupted into quite a large verbal confrontation involving many members of the band. At this point, Ron stepped in to figure out what had happened and then immediately used the problem as an opportunity to teach a lesson about respect and about trying to understand where others are coming from. He said he did not want to dwell on this display of immaturity because what they had just done was so special. He did not want that to be overshadowed by something negative. The students filled the equipment truck, boarded the busses, and we drove back to Pico Rivera.

After every social outreach concert, the students return and enjoy a meal together before moving into the band room for a serious conversation about the day's event. This concert was no different and when we returned to the school, a group of parents were in the middle of preparing a cookout for everyone. We enjoyed burgers and quesadillas and the students ran around burning off endless amounts of energy. Before long, a student rang the big bell, which let everyone know it was time to return to the band room for the group discussion.



It was evident that the most meaningful moments of the outreach experience was audience visitation and the post-concert discussion. The Advanced Band is generally younger than the Honor Band and those students have not done as many outreach concerts. Since the Advanced band has not been immersed in the outreach culture as deeply as the Honor Band, and because both bands were now in the band room at the same time, there was more commotion in the room than I had become used to. Students talked excitedly and fidgeted in small groups, many students had empty bags of chips in their hands that they mindlessly crinkled, and some students even ran around the room. Ron set the mood for the conversation by telling everyone to get anything out of their hands that made noise, turn all cell phones off, and get ready to respect all those that are willing to talk.

The students shared the stories they had heard from the audience members and talked about their reactions. Some revealed how much it meant to them when people started singing along. Others were happy because they had been told that they reminded them of someone's grandchild. Many students repeated one of Ron's favorite quotes, "We used our God-given gifts and talents to leave others better off today." The students radiated with smiles and there were even some tears as the stories came out. This led me to believe that almost every student walked away from that experience with a feeling that they had helped a fellow human being. The only parents in the room were those that had chaperoned and although none of them contributed to the conversation, I could see a look of pride on their faces. I sensed the students truly felt they had made a difference in

someone's life. A complete transcript of post-concert discussions can be found in Appendix E.

### **Outreach Fundraising**

Students play a large role in raising funds for the North Park Band outreach projects. The money in the outreach account is used to purchase instruments for disadvantaged children. The money is also used to cover the necessary costs associated with including these children on tours or in parades. While operational costs such as transportation, uniforms, equipment, etc. are covered through the band student bank account, the money in the outreach account is only used towards the children to whom the band reaches out.

Every school day, band students sell cupcakes, popcorn, and water to the North Park Middle School community. At the beginning of the year, students have the opportunity to volunteer to be on one of five "cupcake teams", each made up of four students. Each person on a team is responsible for bringing a dozen cupcakes to school on their assigned day every week. Ron works with a popcorn distributor who often donates pre-packaged bags of popcorn to the program. Through the outreach account, water is purchased in bulk and sold for profit. Cupcakes are sold for two dollars, while water and popcorn are one dollar each. In between class periods, various students from each of Ron's classes volunteer to take the food cart outside of the band room to sell the items to the general school population. After school, ice cream cones are added to the inventory. The snacks are a very popular commodity among North Park students. No matter how

many people approached the cart, the band students always maintain control of the crowd and the money. The cupcakes sell out daily and the venture earns approximately \$350-\$400 per week.

Ron has created a culture where the students feel it is an honor to be a member of a cupcake team. The quality of the cupcakes is evidence that the students take great pride in fulfilling this duty. Making a dozen cupcakes once a week seems like a lot to ask of middle school students. When I asked them if they felt burdened by this task, they often looked at me with a confused expression on their faces and told me it was no burden, in fact it was fun. The teams often create a social event out of making their cupcakes. They get together at a different team member's house once a week to bake and decorate all the cupcakes for the next day. I asked the students if their parents ever seemed to get upset about the extra responsibility. Most students told me that if their parents ever get upset, they explain how much it means to them that they are raising money for the children that need help.

Ron puts rewards in place throughout the year for these students. He gives them cupcake team t-shirts, takes them on occasional Saturday field trips, and comes up with spontaneous ways to reward the students. Last summer the Broadway show *Les Miserables* traveled to Los Angeles and Ron took all the cupcake team members to see the show. If the responsibility does become too much for someone to handle, another student steps in and fills the job.

## **Musical Instruction**

Although this study is focused on the social justice aspect of Ron's curriculum, discussing the musical aspects of the program is also important to the implications of this paper. In the early years, the fact that the North Park Band was the first middle school band to march in the Rose Parade and to attend the National Band Festival at Carnegie Hall shows that the band had reached a high level of musical quality. While Ron has shifted his focus to principles of social justice, there is still an emphasis on the acquisition of musical skills and knowledge.

Conversations with students and parents reveal that students feel a sense of accomplishment through their musical achievements similar to those of my own students when I was a middle school teacher. One mother told me, "Their self-esteem has gone up. Every time they learn a new song or are able to hit higher notes, it's a sense of accomplishment for them." I observed the students practicing before school and during band rehearsals and it was evident that they were disciplined in their pursuit of excellence.

The students learn music in a way that I have found to be typical of most instrumental music education programs. The musicians work their way through a standard band method book, eventually playing multi-part duets and trios, and finally playing full ensemble music. Ron has created a set of warm-up routines, including long-tones, lip slurs, and tonguing exercises, which the students play through everyday. Like many music teachers, Ron believes that a strong focus on fundamentals is what produces good tone production and flexibility within the ensemble.

Ron introduces the students to conducting in their first year when they are given the opportunity to conduct the band during warm-up exercises. He coaches the conductors on different conducting patterns and how to lead the group rather than follow them. As the students mature, they begin the process of learning how to conduct a full piece of music. Ron takes responsibility for teaching the band music to the students, but when the band has learned to play a piece, he allows students to conduct the music. He creates a supportive environment where students learning to conduct music do not have to worry about other students laughing at them. By observing their musical skill set and level of maturity, Ron decides which students will conduct which pieces based on the varying degrees of difficulty. Consistent with most of his teaching methods, Ron spends a considerable amount of time working with students as they are first learning to conduct a piece and gradually allows them to have more independence until they are able to do it on their own.

Throughout the development of the program, Ron has changed the general repertoire that the band performs. While he used to have the band perform masterworks such as Charles Carter's *Overture for Winds*, he now selects music that will be meaningful to different audiences and will also be musically rewarding for his students. When asked about his repertoire selection process Ron told me, "My repertoire is fun and educational but does not include much of the music that most bands play in contests. Some of that music is OK, but a lot is formulated garbage that lines the pockets of publishers. I commission a lot of music that is different than the music list stuff. I like Broadway show

tunes a lot, and so do the kids.” The substantial piece that both the Honor and Advanced Bands had been working on throughout the fall of 2012 was *Selections from “Les Miserables”* arranged by Warren Baker and he was beginning to teach *Selections from “The Sound of Music”* arranged by Robert Russell Bennett. The concerts I witnessed also included an arrangement of *Pirates of the Caribbean* and *Bella’s Lullaby* from the *Twilight* series. Besides Broadway show tunes, many of the pieces performed in the concerts feature student duets or soloists. Ron also selects music that will allow for audience participation. The students perform pieces the audience will recognize and can sing along with (I noticed a favorite was an arrangement of *Mack the Knife*). They often perform Michael Story’s *Concerto for Pots and Pans*. Instead of using pots and pans, the band gives audience members toy instruments so they can play along at select moments. With music that involves audience participation, the students play through the piece once to demonstrate and then ask the audience to join them the second time through.

While the purpose and therefore selection of the repertoire has shifted, Ron still maintains musical integrity in his program. Students must master musical skills so that they are able to teach lessons to other children and conduct the ensemble. While Ron admits that he does not push the students as hard as he did when they were competing, there is still a drive to achieve high performance standards.

### **Development of Compassion and Understanding**

Although Ron challenges his students to achieve a high level of musicianship, his primary teaching focus is on humanistic values. Does this type of program actually

develop values of compassion and understanding in students? Being exposed to the depravities faced by many people in the community, can students actually learn to have sympathy for others and gain an understanding of their circumstances?

The majority of the students in the North Park Band program filled out a survey I developed, which asked different questions about involvement in the program and how their experiences influenced their lives outside of band. A selection of student surveys can be found in Appendix C. One of the questions I asked was simple: “Do you like doing social outreach concerts? Explain why or why not.” Not one student answered negatively. Perhaps students who are not enthused about reaching out to the community do not join the band, or perhaps students who were not completely satisfied chose not to respond to the survey. However among the positive answers, there was a wide range in depth of response. Some of the most common answers spoke of being happy to see the smiles on the faces of those less fortunate than them, being happy to meet new people, and being happy because they “left others better off than they were when [they] first met.” Others quoted Ron saying they were “using their God-given gifts and talents for the good of others.”

A few students ventured away from the word “happy” to describe their feelings in more detail. One student responded, “I enjoy social outreach because the people touch my heart and making *them* happy is a beautiful feeling.” Another student said, “I like the social outreach concerts because every time I go home from a concert, I get a feeling that I don’t get very often in my everyday life. It’s just an amazing feeling that I cannot

describe. I just feel like my heart is asking me, ‘Don’t you feel proud that you just left multiple people better off than they were when you first met?’” One student explained, “When I play my clarinet for the people at the outreach concerts, I don’t see what other people see. I see the goodness in that person we are playing to.”

The students were asked to describe the outreach concert that was most meaningful to them. Again, there were no negative answers and a wide range of positive responses. Many students reflected on concerts where audience members told the students that they reminded them of their own children or grandchildren. Several students stated that the Veterans Concert was most meaningful to them because they were playing for “veterans of war” and they were touched that these men and women risked their lives for the freedom of people they do not even know. Other students spoke of the loneliness that the homeless women and the people in the nursing homes suffered from and how happy those men and women would be to see the students when they arrived at their facility. One student said she developed a strong bond with a woman during a visit following a concert at a nursing home and regularly goes to see her outside of school.

Throughout my interviews and review of the surveys, I learned that the students have seen a change in themselves and in their band friends since they joined the North Park Band. Many students said they are nicer, happier, and now enjoy giving more than receiving. A few students mentioned that they are more forgiving, explaining that they have learned to let go of grudges and show kindness towards those who have been mean to them. One student noticed that “We all care for each other much more than we did



before band. We help people more and are more kind.” Another student reflected, “I’ve seen a change in my friends. We like don’t be mean to others anymore, we are respectful.”

The survey asked students if they felt they were learning skills through these experiences that related to other parts of their lives. Some students did not understand the question while others gave basic answers about public speaking or about developing social skills through their conversations with audience members. However, most students responded by saying they were becoming better people, less selfish, and were learning to value what they have because they have seen people who have so much less. One student, Kathy, told a story about a Saturday shopping trip with a friend. She had just celebrated her thirteenth birthday and was off to the mall with \$40 of birthday money to spend. When they arrived at the mall, Kathy saw a homeless woman and child begging for change outside the entrance. She was struck with compassion and bent down to talk to the woman and child. She learned of their suffering and realized the child was very cold and did not have enough clothing. Kathy took the jacket off her back and wrapped it around the homeless child. She saw tears in the mother’s eyes and then she “gave the mom everything, all of the money [she] had.”

### **Music for the Good of Others**

The survey asked students if they felt it was important that they were doing social outreach concerts. Many of their answers included the North Park Band’s motto, “Leaving others better off than they were when we first met.” Students consistently spoke of using music to help others who are less fortunate by making them happy. One

student told me, “The North Park Band is trying to bring peace to a very broken world.” A seventh-grade boy told me that he likes spreading “culture and love” with people he meets, while another student said, “You feel different when you know you’re making someone’s life better with music.” One student remarked, “We are helping other people have hope and we bring love and joy back into their lives,” while another student noticed the change that happened amongst the residents of a nursing home as the students performed and said, “It makes me feel happy just to see the people be awakened by our music.” One student said, “I like doing social outreach because it makes me realize what a difference I can make with my music and by being nice to others.”

Ron consistently repeats a particular phrase to his students when speaking about their impact on social change, saying that change happens “moment by moment, day by day, and through a lifetime.” Many students spoke of the importance of helping one person at a time. One student explained to me, “It is very important because we are helping others and making the world better even by the smallest of things we do. It helps others and gives them hope and we need more of that in our community and in the world.” During an interview, a former North Park Band student told me many stories about the different children she helped through her experiences with the band. I challenged her and asked, “There are about ten billion people in the world. Who cares if you help *one* of them?” A look of astonishment came over her face as she emphatically replied, “*Every* person matters!”

While many music students across the country perform band concerts in beautiful concert halls where they cannot see the faces of the people in the audience, the North Park students see the reactions of audience members while they are playing. The students also have the unique opportunity to speak with the audience members afterward, allowing viewers the chance to tell the students how special the performance was to them. The majority of students spoke to me about the happiness they feel when they are playing their instruments and they see that they are having a positive affect on the individual audience members.

More evidence of the program's impact on the students is revealed in the student practice charts. Ron's students fill out a weekly log that looks like a typical practice chart, containing boxes where students write how many minutes they practice everyday. However there is more to Ron's chart. While there is a place for the parent to sign, they first must answer two yes or no questions: "Was the student's room clean this week," and "Did the student treat others with respect at home this week?" Finally, there is a writing portion the student has to complete with the following instructions:

Music is meant to be shared with others. Just as we need to practice our instruments it does us well to practice being kind, generous, and caring to others. You are assigned to perform at least one act of kindness either in your home or in your community each week, and then write about it. Chores do not count. The act of kindness is to be something that you did not have to do. Use the lines provided and the back of the paper if need be.

### **Community Impact**

While the scope of this study did not involve interviewing the residents or staff of the facilities where the students perform, I was able to observe the reactions of the

audience during the outreach concerts and the interactions between the students and audience members after the performances. Through my knowledge of the history of the program, I am aware of the vast number of opportunities that have been given to homeless, sick, and abused children outside of North Park Middle School. Additionally, students told me of their perceptions of the impact they have on their audiences and peers in the *Kids Helping Kids* program.

Because I did not have the opportunity to speak with these community members, I do not know the scope of the influence the North Park Band has had on them. What I do know is that there are orphans in Mexico, children at homeless shelters, and other disadvantaged children who have received instruments and are getting musical instruction because of Ron's program. I know that many of these children have gone to Disneyland, spent the night in the homes of North Park students and marched with them in a cultural parade the following morning, and of course, traveled to New York City to perform at Carnegie Hall. I do not know the significance of these events for these children because I have not met them, but I can not help but believe these experiences mean a lot to a child that is sick, abused, or has no home.

I was able to observe the "happiness" about which so many North Park students spoke in the audience at the senior centers, the Veterans Home, and the Isaiah House. I watched a room full of people that were literally asleep in their chairs transform into a room filled with jubilation as the students performed their music and then shared stories and told jokes. I saw a veteran lying in a hospital bed, barely able to move and unable to

speak, salute a group of children with a tear in his eye, as they played *God Bless America* for him.

The most powerful transformation I witnessed came during the Christmas concert for homeless women at the Isaiah House. When I first arrived at the home with the band, I saw women that seemed angry and looked hopeless. I noticed a change in them as soon as the students began to set up. The North Park Band makes regular appearances at the Isaiah House and many had seen the band perform in the past. The women showed enthusiasm for the show that was about to start and dashed around to find good seats. From the moment the first student stepped forward to introduce the band, women in the audience began to interact by cheering and shouting out to the students. That first student began to say, “Thank you for having us here today,” but before she could finish, a woman was shouting, “You kids are *always* welcome here, thanks for coming!” The tone throughout the concert was happy and festive, but when the concert closed with everyone singing *Silent Night* as the band played, there was not a dry eye to be seen.

I assumed that while it would feel uplifting to see the North Park students perform at the Isaiah House, the concert would have an overall feeling of sadness to it. Surely homeless women would be especially sad at Christmas time, and seeing these children would make them miss their own family members even more. I could not have been more wrong. This might have been the most joyful concert I have ever attended. Since the students had met many of these women before, some of the students had brought pictures or cards for specific women. One woman came up to show me a card a

student had made for her and I told her about some of the other places the children play and how they teach music lessons to other disadvantaged children. Tears began streaming down the woman's face as she told me that not only were these children *humanitarians*, but also that music is magic and these kids had brought her hope with their magic. Before I knew it, one group of students was singing *Feliz Navidad* with a group of ladies, while another group was singing *We Wish You a Merry Christmas*, and yet another was singing *Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer*. All of a sudden the scene seemed to turn into a game of who could sing the loudest and who could be the cheeriest. Women were dancing and clapping, cheering for and hugging the children, and a Christmas spirit so heartfelt was being produced that I could only stand back and observe in awe, with tears streaming down *my* face. Although I did not interview these women, I observed a great transformation happening that night. Maybe that feeling only lasted for one night, maybe it lasted for many nights. However Ron has made me a believer that moment by moment, day by day, and throughout a lifetime, events like these have the potential to produce powerful and lasting change in people.

### **Cultivating the Three Teaching Goals: Post-Concert Discussions**

Everyday that he spends with his students, Ron allows his three teaching goals to guide his instruction:

1. To enhance the moral foundation of every student;
2. To awaken a sense of life purpose; and
3. To call every heart to a higher sense of unselfish love.

The most powerful impact of these goals is revealed during the post-concert discussions following outreach events. Ron structures the outreach performance days in a way that allows for moments of high energy, moments of complete fun, and moments of contemplation and reflection. He is able to harness the boundless energy of the students and refocus it towards reflection.

In the post-concert discussions I observed, Ron stood at the front of the room and waited for the students to get seated and quiet. Even when it was quiet, he waited a few more minutes to let the silence work its calming magic on the young people. In a soft voice, Ron finally began to prep the students for the conversation they were about to have. He told them specific ways to *not* be disruptive and constantly reinforced the idea that the discussion would be based on respect. Once he achieved a contemplative environment in the room, he began by asking the students to tell him how the concert went.

When the students were hesitant to speak, Ron guided the discussion in a fast-paced way that broke the ice, allowing students to give quick statements to initiate conversation. If they became distracted or disrespectful, he instantly redirected them with a few simple statements that contained a life lesson:

Others have important things to say and in this room, each person who's speaking deserves your respect. And not just in this room, but everywhere you go. You respect everyone and everything at all times through your life. All people, all things deserve respect. Everything that is part of creation must be respected. All life, all things. OK? And that starts right here and now, OK?

If the conversation got very serious for a while, he found a way to add humor. During the discussion following the Veterans Outreach Concerts, a student spoke of a woman she had met who was 98 and Ron replied, “Oh we should have her meet that other guy who was 102, huh? [lots of laughter and whistles from students], but ya know he’ll probably say, ‘No I don’t like younger women, [everyone laughed heartily], I don’t date girls that are under 100!’ [the laughter grew louder from everyone] OK, OK, shhhhh, [Ron continued laughing] you’re gonna be ok there.”

The full transcriptions of each of the three post-concert discussions can be found in Appendix E, however one example of Ron directing the conversation towards his three teaching goals is included below. The students had been playing *Selections from “Les Miserables”* and Ron concluded his discussion after the Isaiah House Christmas performance with this statement:

I think next week I’ll take time and teach you a little bit about *Les Miserables*. I have a word that I’m going to use and I want you to memorize the meaning when I give it to you: Grace. *Les Miserables* is not about a man who goes on a journey; it’s about grace. And I’ll give you the definition right now and then you need to remember it and you need to seek the meaning of the word grace. Grace, an undeserved gift meant to change a person’s life for the better. Grace, an undeserved gift meant to change a person’s life for the better. In *Les Miserables* it comes in the form of two candlesticks, but it comes up many times. Grace, an undeserved gift, undeserved, *undeserved* gift. That means when someone is mean to you, they don’t *deserve* for you to be kind back. But your kindness begins the healing that that mean person needs. You see in them that they are human and that they messed up. And because they messed up, they need to heal. Not for you to take revenge, but they need healing. So when someone is not kind, you extend grace, an undeserved gift meant to change their life for the better. And then you participate in healing someone that was not nice to you. How lovely, isn’t that lovely to think of? So you find out that they were beautiful all the time. They just made a mistake, that’s all. That’s all. So let’s all make a promise that we’re going to continue to work for a better community, a better world, beyond North Park.



You graduate and you go your own way, which is a special way if you learned all the lessons. And you go out into the world and you strive to leave others better off than they were when they first met *you*. And you do that by using all your God-given gifts and talents, the way they were *intended to be used*, for the good of others. And you'll use them for the good of others moment by moment, day by day, and through a lifetime.

### **Epilogue**

I was surprised and impressed by many of the students' statements, actions, and by Ron's teaching style. Such mature thinking was revealed when Ron and I were with the four group leaders at the Veterans Facility and a student, not Ron or myself, realized we had forgotten to designate a place to put their instrument cases. Often times, I found it very difficult to allow the students to be left to their own devices when teaching other students or when leading their bands around the facility. In those moments I realized just how much Ron had learned to "let go" and that I have not yet achieved that level of wisdom.

I do not have a lot of experience being in nursing homes and I was uncomfortable seeing the residents. I definitely was not looking forward to making conversation after the concerts. I was shocked when I saw the ease and comfort with which the students approached the residents. As students went up to visit individuals in their rooms, again I was impressed by the maturity with which each group entered a room and decided how to proceed without any guidance from an adult.

In my own life, I have a hard time appreciating the power of a small change. (I have always wanted to impact masses of people all at once or I have felt that the results might not be worth the effort.) The middle school students at North Park have shown me

the error in my thinking. I was so impressed by how many students understood the importance of helping one person at a time. So many students spoke to me about the significance of small change that I am convinced many of them truly believe that change comes “moment by moment, day by day, and throughout a lifetime.”

When I asked Ron if he had any specific teaching objectives, I was surprised and encouraged that he was able to give me a list of his three goals. I have been devising teaching objectives related to specific musical outcomes since my undergraduate days and I did not understand how a person would articulate goals that related humanistic outcomes and ideas of social justice. Ron’s objectives were not the kind of learning objectives I used as a teacher, nor have I ever heard of other teachers employing goals that seem so indefinable and hard to measure. I got the sense from Ron that he has no formal assessments put in place to evaluate whether or not students are learning these objectives. Instead, he just trusts that over time, his methods of teaching his philosophy will have an impact on his students. Finally, as Ron led the post-concert discussions, it became clear to me that I was witnessing an artist who had perfected the craft of teaching. He has an ability to take a comment from a middle school child and, by using language they can understand, mold that statement into a larger life lesson for all to learn from. It amazed me how he wove his three teaching goals into his responses to the student comments throughout these discussions.

As I observed this program I realized that the North Park Band students are having many of the experiences that are typical of other band programs. They have fun

playing music, they enjoy being with their friends, and they feel that the band has a sense of family to which they belong. However, the students are getting even more out of the program. These young people feel they are having a positive influence on the lives of others and that they are making a difference in their community. Because so many students spoke about becoming better people through their experiences in the program and because I observed them working with such a sense of purpose and responsibility, I can easily see that Ron's three teaching goals are having a strong impact on his students.

## **DEBATES, FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS, FINAL THOUGHTS**

This detailed examination of Ron's program provokes educators to go beyond traditional goals to develop a curriculum rooted in social justice. Breaking through standard practices, Ron inspires us to reach heights we never thought were possible. The willingness and ability to expand a program to include these ideals may be a critical step towards regaining the social relevance of music education, perhaps ultimately ensuring the future of our field. This study gives educators the opportunity to benefit from Ron's failures and successes, and this chapter translates lessons learned with the hope that other teachers will have the confidence to follow his lead.

This chapter considers whether Ron's students receive a music education or something else and interprets the prior discussions of Ron's teaching style and objectives. Following a summary of findings, the chapter identifies implications for current and future K-12 and higher education teachers and provides a description of areas for further research.

### **Music Education? Or Something Else...**

Education is a means to an end. While the national standards and many large ensemble programs across the country define the "end" as musical knowledge and skill, Ron Wakefield is teaching to an end that encompasses the whole person. The three teaching objectives he uses to guide his instruction are not musical; they are objectives that lay a foundation to educate young people in the areas of selflessness, compassion for others, establishing a sense of life purpose.

A program that prioritizes humanistic values rather than offering only a music education brings up a debate: Is this a music education or something else? Ron's guidelines for selecting music do not stem from works listed on a state or competition festival list. He does not select music based on advancing the technical mastery of his students to the highest degree. He selects music that will allow for interaction during outreach concerts, for students to solo with the band, music that he can teach students to conduct, and music that will be rewarding to his students and to their audiences. He selects pieces that the audiences will recognize, that he feels his students will have an emotional connection to, and for parades he selects music that is representative of different cultures. He does not strive to have his students play the great masterworks of wind band literature; instead, he chooses to focus the time and energy necessary to develop compassionate future citizens who are aware of the issues facing the world today.

I have heard so many musicians speak about experiences at a young age that caused them to fall in love with and then devote their lives to music. Are Ron's students being offered those musical opportunities? Are Ron's students gaining the technical skills and musical knowledge that is typical of a middle school instrumental ensemble program? I believe the answer to these questions is yes, and then some. I spoke to a parent who has three sons in the band about this issue and she said, "They're learning music yes, but there is so much more behind it that parents [would want their children to learn]. I mean

everybody knows that North Park is the best band, yea. But there is just so much more than that. There is so much more.”

It is clear that Ron’s students are learning musical skills and knowledge typical of a middle school program; I witnessed them *teaching* these skills and knowledge to other students. As a music educator I have seen students demonstrate musical understanding through performance, but when asked to explain musical concepts, they often struggled. Ron’s students are gaining a deeper understanding of musical skills because they have to work to explain them in a way that will be understood by their younger peers. Often I heard students coming up with multiple ways of explaining the same concept, clearly demonstrating a grasp of that concept.

Ironically, it is possible that the students in the North Park Band are having more meaningful musical experiences by playing less difficult music. I have no doubt that something special happens when one is involved in a high quality, group performance of a Western masterwork. I know those performances had an impact on me. However, I was never sure whether others in the group had the same type of experience, and I did not know what the audience thought. And frankly, as a middle or high school student, I did not care how the music affected others; I only cared about how it affected me. That is not true for the North Park students. Their mission is to have a positive impact on their audience. I believe they are experiencing music in a completely different way than students whose teachers have purely musical goals as the ends of instruction. The North Park students understand the transformational power of music because they have seen the

faces of their audience members and they have felt the satisfaction of visiting with them afterward. They have seen their students in homeless shelters, hospitals, and centers for abused children change as a result of their musical instruction. Ron has created a program that allows the affects of music to be tangible to his students. These young people truly believe they are making their community and their world a better place through the power of music. As one of Ron's students explained, "Expressing my love through my instrument for people makes them really happy and I'm happy knowing I made a difference in someone's life." The North Park Band students are not using their music to receive the highest possible score at a competition or to give the most successful performance of the best piece ever written for wind band; they are using their music for the good of *others*. To quote another one of Ron's students, "We don't learn how to just play music, we learn to express ourselves and help others with it."

### **My Interpretation of Ron's Teaching Style: How He Does It**

Three main factors differentiate the program Ron has established at North Park Middle School from the band programs I have found to be typical throughout my experience. First, Ron's teaching objectives are centered on the development of the character of his students rather than the acquisition of musical skills and knowledge. Second, the purposes of the bands' performances are to reach out to the community and to embrace different cultures. Third, Ron is a unique man whose entire life is devoted to the ideals of a socially just world. This section discusses how Ron teaches his three

educational goals, how he creates the culture found within his band, and concludes with a summary of this great teacher.

### **Ron's Objectives and Language**

Ron's three teaching objectives (1. To enhance the moral foundation of every student 2. To awaken a sense of life purpose 3. To call every heart to a higher sense of unselfish love) are not objectives that can be assessed through standard testing practices or by musical performance. Similarly, his teaching objectives may be difficult to incorporate into a standard undergraduate music education class. However, because Ron allows these three objectives to guide his teaching, he finds the many opportunities presented throughout a band rehearsal, throughout a school day, or throughout a performance event to teach life lessons to his students.

Ron has integrated a few key phrases into his teaching, which he states so often that his students use them in their own conversations ("leaving others better off than they were when we first met," to "use your God-given gifts and talents for the good of others," and to create change "moment by moment, day by day, and throughout a lifetime.") In the beginning of my time with the North Park Band students, I thought the phrases had no real meaning to the students and that the students were simply repeating what they heard their teacher say. However the more I spoke to the students, I realized that to many of them, these phrases do mean something and have an impact on their daily lives. One eighth-grade male student told me that he was confused by and feels bad about the reasons behind homelessness. He had never thought about this idea before he joined the



North Park Band, but when Ron explained what would happen during this student's first outreach concert at the Isaiah House he realized, "we're leaving others better off." I asked him to elaborate on what that meant to him and he said, "to help people even when they don't ask you, just to go out and help them." He said this concept is now something he strives for everyday. Many students used their own words to describe these different phrases, showing that most have internalized and understood what they mean.

I spoke to a former North Park Band parent who had been with the program for many years, watching the transition from a highly competitive program into what it is today. He explained to me the overwhelming feelings he had when he saw the homeless children perform for the first time on the Carnegie Hall stage, taking into account the struggles in their lives and the magnitude of meaning involved with them making it to that iconic stage. I asked if he thought the North Park students were able to grasp the enormity of the event:

I think they are too young. But I think they will. Because these are the kinds of things you want to instill in your own children. And I think over time, as they mature, ya know, these are the kinds of things that will come back to them. And I think that it's a great way to pass the baton to the next generation. I *do* believe it will have a *very* positive impact. And not on everybody of course, I mean obviously people are different and some people think it's a joke, and ya know when I was a kid I joked around a lot, but in the back of their mind they still know that what they did meant something to somebody. I mean how can you touch somebody here, and they thank you for what [you've] done? It may not mean anything right now, but as you get older, you can relate a little bit more, and you can think, these are people. These experiences allow the kids to see these are *people*...Ya know it brings a face, and a story. (A full transcription of this interview can be found in Appendix B.)

Based on my interactions with the students, I agree with this former parent. Although these children range in age from 10-14, I believe they are at least beginning to understand the extent of the social issues they are being exposed to. I am confident that these experiences will affect them far beyond their years at North Park Middle School.

### **Creating a Culture Within the Band**

The successful implementation of a music program like the one at North Park is not as hard as it may seem. It simply requires embracing a social justice philosophy and consciously fostering these principles to create a community based on acceptance and respect. My observations of Ron's program assure me that compassion is a natural outcome of this process.

Ron provides many opportunities for older students to lead by example. He has created a culture where the Honor Band is the most esteemed group, the members of which are looked upon as the leaders of the North Park Band program, and the ones who *get to* go out and do the majority of the outreach concerts. I saw younger students stare with admiration at the members of the Honor Band and I heard many students speak about being excited for the day when they are inducted into the Honor band.

Band students in all grade levels are brought together as much as possible. From the beginning, younger students are introduced to older students, as they become the teachers of their younger peers. This structure creates an opportunity for a younger student to look up to his or her student teacher from the start. When the North Park Band marches in parades, Ron often involves all grade levels. To prepare for parades, Ron has

combined band rehearsals on Saturday mornings. During these rehearsals, the younger students observe the seriousness with which the older students approach rehearsals. Because a student/teacher relationship has already been formed, the older students naturally welcome and mentor the younger members.

A high maturity level is necessary for middle school students to do outreach in the places where the North Park Band performs. Ron knows that this type of program would not have the impact it has on his students if they did not handle the outreach concerts with compassion, concern, and maturity. In fact, the outcome of these concerts could be negative if the students did not take their role seriously. Therefore, he eases students into the process of outreach concerts by allowing the Advanced Band to join the Honor Band for some of the performances. Like the dynamic at the marching band rehearsals, younger students observe and are influenced by the manner with which older students approach performances and group discussions that follow.

### **Summary of a Great Teacher**

Ron Wakefield is unlike any other person I have encountered in my life. His life has been a journey of transformation and has been guided for the past ten years by a deepening spirituality. He has gone through a process where he has learned to let go of egotistical behavior that leads to control issues and to relinquish unnecessary material possessions. He believes in the positive effect one person can have on another person, a community, and the world; his teaching career is embedded in that belief.

The wisdom Ron has obtained through his life experiences gives him the ability to converse with students and parents in a manner that I did not think was possible. With a knowing and loving way, I saw him guide students through a process of understanding what it means to be humble, to have compassion, to help others, and to know the difference between right and wrong. On a few occasions, I even saw him guide parents through the same process of discovery. In the three discussions I witnessed following outreach concerts, I watched Ron masterfully lead participants into deep conversations about the meaning of life, finding a life purpose, and the rewards that come from selfless behavior. These are concepts that many would think are too hard to grasp by middle school students, but Ron has a special knack for articulating complex ideas in ways that can be understood by young people. He has created such a culture of respect and care for others in his classroom that he is able to speak very quietly and deliberately without any disruptions from the class. During those group discussions it seemed as though each student was literally hanging on every word that came out of Ron's mouth.

As his career is one of the avenues in which Ron lives out his personal goals of obtaining social justice in the world, Ron has devoted more time and money than a typical teacher might be willing to donate to his or her program. When the first *Kids Helping Kids* programs were developing, Ron purchased all of the instruments for the children involved. When he set up the different music clubs along the East Coast, he used his own time and money to travel to these programs to help facilitate and check on their progress. Ron even used his own money to enroll the first member of the Isaiah House Band, Tiffany, into a

private school. She is a senior this year and he has paid for her entire secondary education. He often uses personal time on weekends or after school to take students on a field trip related to social justice issues that have come up in band, or a lighthearted trip to a diner for a burger and a milkshake. Ron confessed to me that he had recently been a judge for a local, competitive band festival. I was surprised to hear this because he presents himself as anti-competition. However, his motives became clear when he winked and told me that the money he earned “would be put to good use.”

For a while I was intimidated to be in the presence of such an amazing person and I thought that maybe a program like this would not be possible unless Ron Wakefield was at the helm of it. But I do not believe that anymore. Countless music teachers already sacrifice their weekends, vacations, and/or their own money for the benefit of their students and their program. The only difference is that band teachers usually give up a weekend for a marching band competition or a concert festival and spend their own money for some kind of equipment for their *own* students. If these teachers shifted their focus to outreach rather than competition, I think they might make choices similar to those that Ron has made. More importantly, they may find that the things they sacrifice would have a larger and deeper impact on their students as well as on their communities.

### **Summary**

A summary of findings from this study is presented below. Following the list is a more detailed discussion of some of the most powerful points.

- Ron Wakefield is a master teacher whose teaching style and personal beliefs propel his program to a high level of meaning and impact for those involved.
- The North Park Band does not compete in any concert or marching festivals. Instead, the students are immersed in social and cultural outreach projects and performances.
- Rather than performing only a few times a year, students play an extensive amount of concerts and parades.
- Students are receiving a quality music education as well as learning humanistic values and the potential for using music for the good of others.
- This kind of band program has a significant influence on students and the community.

The first chapter of this paper cited literature that debates the difference between justice and charity. Upon reading articles stating charity is not justice, I was initially worried that maybe there was something wrong with what the North Park Band was doing. I feared that maybe these students were providing acts of charity that offered them feel-good moments and in doing so, were continuing to fuel our society's injustices. When I broached this topic with Ron, he quoted Saint Bonaventure and provided a very simple definition of justice, which I had not read in any of the articles cited: "Justice – Restoring to beauty what has been deformed"

(<http://www.sistersosf.org/JusticePeace/JPICNetwork.aspx>). That definition resolves the debate for me. There may be times in life when an act of charity is needed to restore beauty to what has been deformed. Some people have access to the means necessary to restore beauty and others do not. I do not know how the philosophers who debate the

difference between charity and justice would label the North Park program. But I do know that Ron's students are creating beauty amongst people whose lives have become deformed.

The North Park Band students are receiving a quality music education *and* something else. They have a high standard of excellence for their musical performances and while they are realizing the intrinsic aesthetic experience, they are also learning the transformational power music has when it is shared with others. They are given the trust and support needed to develop leadership, independence, and to contribute to the well being of people in their community. Ron's students understand that change is measured not by the number of people affected; a change for one person is equally as important as change for many.

I believe Ron's program has such an impact on those involved because he carefully takes many steps to ensure that the band program gives profound meaning to the lives of his students. When I was a middle school student, my band teacher experimented with social outreach by taking the band to a nursing home to play a Christmas concert. However, my life was not changed because of that single performance. I was not immersed in a large number of social outreach concerts. My teacher did not prepare our band in the same way Ron prepares his students emotionally for these concerts, and we did not interact with the audience after the performance. Furthermore, we did not sit down for a serious conversation after the concert to discuss the impact and meaning of

what we had just done and how we can relate that to the rest of our lives. Taking the time to add these simple steps makes all the difference.

## **Recommendations for K-12 and Higher Education Teachers**

### **K-12 Recommendations**

At the 2012 Midwest Band and Orchestra Clinic, I saw a presentation by a high school teacher who has incorporated social outreach into his band program by way of chamber music. Michael Pavlik, director of bands at York Community High School in Elmhurst, Illinois, split his entire band into small chamber ensembles, and gave them the assignment of performing two concerts per year in the community. The students are responsible for choosing or arranging their own music, rehearsing, and organizing their performances. His presentation at the Midwest Clinic involved one of these chamber ensembles and I learned that he and his students have come to many of the same conclusions that Ron and his students have realized. The students are given opportunities to develop responsibility through the ownership they have over their chamber groups. These students spoke of the transformation they see in their audience members throughout their performances. Like Ron, Michael explained that he started to implement this program in small ways, that it has begun to take on a life of its own, and that it is giving new meaning to the music education he is providing to his students.

Ron Wakefield did not turn the North Park Band into what it is today overnight. The development of outreach programs, teaching philosophies, and fundraising efforts happened gradually over many years. This is perhaps the most important aspect for



teachers to keep in mind when trying to implement ideas of music education for social justice into their own teaching. North Park's first outreach concert at the Cabrini Home was not intentionally focused on helping the community. Ron felt he and his students had such a special experience at that concert they began to incorporate more forms of outreach into the band program. One thing led to another and ten years later, the program has grown to include all that it does today. The community of Pico Rivera is characterized by a strong Latino Catholic base. Without the parental support arising from this unique demographic and the support of his administration, Ron would not be able to execute his program or explicitly teach moral values exactly the way he does. Every location presents different opportunities for outreach and teachers should take advantage of what their communities have to offer.

### **Higher Education Recommendations**

In her dissertation *Learning from Experience: Influences on Music Student Teachers' Perceptions and Practices*, Margaret Schmidt states "Experience is the best teacher" and "You learn best by doing" (p. 3). The idea that teachers teach how they were taught is one that has permeated educational circles. If ensemble programs in higher education continue to model the standard ensemble curriculum (having multiple rehearsals followed by a concert in a theater), future music educators will keep using this format because it will be all that they have known. Until we begin to change the nature of the ensemble experience in higher education, we cannot expect change from future teachers.

Throughout this study, I have become aware of a few higher education ensemble programs that have incorporated ideas of social justice into their curriculum. At ASU, every student enrolled in the instrumental large ensemble program is required to do one social outreach performance throughout the year. Students put together a chamber ensemble or give a solo performance at a facility of their choice in the community. While some students view the assignment simply as something they must do in order to receive an “A” in the class, many students take the assignment very seriously and create a performance that is meaningful to them and to the audience members for whom they perform. One student who has a diagnosis of mental illness performed at the facility where he had been treated. He wanted to show those that were in the facility that they too could recover and go on with their lives, which gave him a sense of closure. A group of students organized a performance at a center for people with developmental disabilities. The concert entailed holiday tunes that the audience could sing along with and they shared stories over cookies and punch following the performance. The direct result of the program at ASU is that an average of 250 music students per year reach out to the Phoenix community to perform for diverse audiences who typically do not have the opportunity or the desire to come to formal ensemble concerts (<http://music.asu.edu/ensembles/>).

After meeting Ron Wakefield at the 2012 CBDNA Band Education Symposium, Dr. Eric Hammer, Director of Bands and Professor of Music Education at the University of the Pacific Conservatory of Music in Stockton, California, changed his ensemble

syllabus to include an outreach program similar to what is offered at ASU. His students go into the community to perform an outreach concert. Like ASU, in order to receive an “A” in the class, students must meet this social engagement requirement. If students do not wish to do an outreach concert, they can make the choice to receive a lower grade (Hammer, informal remarks).

In May of 2009 Dr. Thomas C. Duffy, director of bands at Yale University, presented a concert with the Yale University Wind Ensemble and Chorus as well as the rap group 4Peace. The concert, entitled “Yale 4Peace, Rap for Justice,” was aimed at educating local high school students about the dangers of gangs and gang violence. A flyer advertising the program spoke more specifically about the purpose of the event:

We intend to redirect the focus of popular rap music to reject the message of violence in favor of a more socially responsible agenda. Without the antisocial agenda, the best musical aspects of rap music have a chance of crossing over to the classical music stage. A rap/classical collaboration can open the door for urban students to hear the sounds of classical music in combination with their popular music. A great civilization needs great and enduring art and artists. This project can combine the best attributes of great classical music and popular rap, introducing students to a world of music that they might never discover otherwise. In addition, the positive musical message, along with a short movie featuring 4Peace and their music depicting inner city violent crime and the associated penalties, will educate concert going students about the serious consequences of choosing to participate in criminal activity and will help to reduce crime in Connecticut’s urban towns and cities.  
(<http://www.yale.edu/yaleband/documents/Yale4PeaceConcertFlyer.pdf>)

As part of the event, high school students were able to submit original raps as part of a composition contest. Three winners were selected and invited to come up on stage to perform their rap for the audience. The ultimate winner was invited to attend a filming of the Black Entertainment Television show, *106<sup>th</sup> and Park*. The guidelines for the contest

stated that the rap had to refrain from using inappropriate language and must be based on ideas of peace, justice, or social issues.

The concert was so successful that Dr. Duffy has replicated the idea every other spring since 2009. He decided to change the audience to local middle school students instead of high school students, hoping that the earlier his message reaches the students, the more potential there is to impact their lives (Duffy, personal communication).

### **Areas for Further Research**

Without a long-term study of the students involved in the North Park Band program it is difficult to determine if this type of program has lasting ramifications on the lives of students as they grow into adult members of society. A study that follows students through their middle school band program and continues into the years immediately following high school may reveal the long lasting implications of this program. An investigation into the lifestyles of adults who are former members of the North Park Band would be lend insight to the effect of Ron's teaching objectives. Additionally, in-depth research should be conducted with the residents and staff members of the facilities to whom the students reach out. Also, research that focuses on children with disadvantages who participate in North Park Band events would further demonstrate the impact this program is having on members of the community.

The final area of further research I would like to suggest is one that will seek out and investigate other music programs around the country that are doing similar types of social justice activities. In the first chapter I referenced David Elliot: "We need to build

coalitions with scholars, teacher educators, and teachers who are already ‘socializing and justicing’ their fields, with the intent of sharing strategies, building mutual strength, and making our colleagues aware of what we are uniquely able to offer” (p. 84). During my research throughout the 2012-2013 school year, I have told many people the story of the North Park Band. It surprised me that a few people spoke of another teacher doing similar work. These people maintained that the person they knew was the only one doing any kind of social justice activity. Research is needed to identify these programs and to inform the larger community of music educators about who they are and what they are doing. As more music education *for* social justice programs are identified in secondary and higher education, the music education field at large will realize that the first stages of a larger movement have begun.

### **Final Thoughts**

Wayne Bowman’s lecture entitled *Music as Ethical Encounter* (2000) explains the concept of music education striving to be less concerned with collecting skills and knowledge and instead, focusing on who people become. He said that music is uniquely suited to develop ethical qualities and standards in people because it is social, requires care, concern, and commitment towards a good outside the self, and gives us vivid examples of a life lived ethically with its “unity, meaning, direction, purpose, and integrity” (p. 18). Bowman is talking about using music education as a tool to bring good to others. He is advocating for the development of the complete person through a music education *for* social justice.

Advocacy for music education has become a priority for music educators. Many people have not experienced the importance of a music education; therefore teachers must continuously fight to maintain staff, budgets, a place in the daily school schedule, and to prove that we deserve a simple amount of respect. If our programs played such a vital role in our communities to the extent that people could not imagine life without us, we would not need to advocate for our importance. One way our field can regain relevance is by educating for social justice. As Elliot stated in *Socializing Music* (2007), we must empower our students “to make music *for* social justice” (p. 84). A parent of a former North Park Band student put it best when he said:

I think music in *this* form is the most important thing because it makes it relevant. There’s one thread through all of society and it is music. For every culture, back for millennia, music has been the common thread through all people. It has brought them joy. And now you’re bringing music education to a different level. And I think unfortunately in California and in so many other places, competition bands have become completely irrelevant. And I think that community outreach through music is the only relevant thing that will keep music *in* school and keep it funded. I hate to say it that way, but I believe that that’s the case. I really believe that this is something that is very important right now. I mean North Park can be proud to say that they were the first middle school to go to the Rose Parade and the first middle school to do this and that, and that’s great, but then it’s gone, it’s fleeting. But when you are constantly reaching out into the community, people remember, North Park Middle School is the band that came to us and played for us when we were eating dinner. It’s different; it’s a whole different community. It’s not just a musical community you are impressing now, it’s the *community*, the community at large.

In 2006, Bowman presented a paper at the International Conference on Music Education, Equity, and Social Justice, which he titled, *Who is the ‘We?’ Rethinking Professionalism in Music Education*. This paper was a declaration that music education must start to realize the relationship between music and social issues because music is

social and has always had profoundly ethical implications. “Music [is] a social act and social fact... [not an] entity to which [one’s] relationship is aesthetic, receptive, and somehow individual in nature” (p. 109). Bowman goes on to present a powerful statement about the importance of choosing, like Ron has done, to educate the whole person instead of educating towards mere musical ends:

Our musical decisions and our choices as music educators are not simply or perhaps, even, primarily concerned with questions of aesthetic worth or the efficacious achievement of “musical” results. They are directly involved in issues of political economy, of access to resources, and in the ethical issues these implicate. Only when we acknowledge the linkage among our musical choices (curricular, pedagogical, etc.), the ways we configure our music educator identities, and issues of social justice will music education be poised to move forward on this front.

Randal Allsup and Eric Sheih published an article in the June 2012 issue of the *Music Educators Journal*, which was centered in the principles of social justice in music education. *Social Justice and Music Education, the Call for a Public Pedagogy* asks a few big questions of music educators: Is the music curriculum public, does it embrace the difficult questions of the day? Or does musical instruction define the limits of your curriculum? The teacher that models their program after North Park would be able to say that he or she *does* embrace the difficult questions of the day, rather than letting musical instruction define their curricular limits.

“Music Education *for* Social Justice” proclaims that music education can actually lead to a more just society. When teachers provide a curriculum that allows students to become directly involved with their communities, young people become aware of the issues that create injustice, meet with people who are directly affected, and through their

educational practices, work to bring justice to their communities and to their world. In order to do this, as David Elliot says, “[the music education profession] needs to reconsider our most deeply engrained assumptions [that we are merely teachers of music]” (p. 84). I hope that the future of music education does not allow musical skills and knowledge to define the scope of what we teach in our classrooms. If that mentality continues, we will miss a golden opportunity to change the world.



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APPENDIX A

RON WAKEFIELD INTERVIEW

This appendix contains the Ron Wakefield interview. All names throughout the interview have been changed in order to protect the privacy of those mentioned.

Carrie: Could you briefly tell me about what you did right after college, you didn't start teaching right away correct?

Ron: Yea um, it was never my intention to be a teacher. My life dream was to be a professional clarinet player. So I was always playing professionally in college and broke into the Hollywood T.V. studios. My junior year I was playing T.V. shows, and then doing a lot of freelance work with orchestras all over L.A. and San Diego counties. I specialized on the bass clarinet and I saw a need for solo bass clarinet repertoire. So I started to develop a repertoire of new music for bass clarinet and piano, and chamber music also, by contacting composers and so on. And composers are always hungry for performances, and so when you promise performances they'll rise. And I was lucky I was always able to convince them but never had to pay them! The biggest one was a major one, a bass clarinet concerto by Ian Krauss, who is now head of music composition at UCLA. And I was able to get the USC symphony to do the world premier of that in order to commission the work. Later the Chicago Symphony played it, not with me [he laughed], with someone else. But so that was a big one. And I contacted composers from many other countries. Really interesting music came in from Japan, really interesting. And some interesting pieces from Australia. So I gave many world premiers and I was very much a part of the chamber music scene in L.A. and soloing and doing recitals up and down California at universities and ya know, demonstrating what the bass clarinet was capable of doing. So I was making it pretty good as a professional clarinet player. I worked in an orchestra in Mexico and I performed with the L.A. Philharmonic at the Hollywood Bowl a number of times. And also when the Met Opera came out, they didn't bring their orchestra. They came out to do concert versions of operas with the L.A. Phil and I was lucky enough to do a lot of that at the Hollywood Bowl. So anyways, I was in Switzerland with my music partner, Joe Lawson, he's also a USC grad and a very, very wonderful composer, great piano, great piano player and we were on a recital tour of Europe: Switzerland and Germany. We'd played the University of Heidelberg and some other things. We broadcast a recital over live Swiss radio. It was really a great honor. And it was all new American music. We decided that we'd play music by American composers, and mostly from the USC faculty. And it was a way of thanking them because they were really supportive to me and it was great for them to get the performances over Radio Switzerland.

But the concert ended with a piece of chamber music that I was not a part of. And so while they were performing, and it was in a Catholic church and I was *not* Catholic, but um, I was back there [in] rooms I didn't understand, not being Catholic. But now I know the green room was what would be called the sacristy. And it was a very life changing moment to play that concert. I was finished playing and the rest [of the group] went out to play the final piece of music ya know, [and] there I was by myself back there. And there was a staircase. And I thought, "Hmmm, maybe I'll go exploring instead of just sit there," ya know [he laughed], "What do I do?" So I walked up this staircase and found myself in a small room. I now understand this was another chapel, but a private chapel. Not one for the public, and I found myself in this chapel. I'll sound like a crazy person right now, but I sat down, just to rest, and then um, it was like my heart began to scream, "YOU MADE IT! YOU'RE A PROFESSIONAL CLARINET PLAYER, you're doing really well, oh yea!" And then my heart said, "Now go teach, now become a teacher." And I was like, "Wait a minute, hey, my career's goin really well." And my heart was still just screaming, "Go be a teacher, go be a teacher." So um, it didn't rest well with me at first. I had to absorb that, ya know. And Joe and I went down to Rome. It wasn't my idea; it was his idea. And he's not Catholic and he's not religious in any way, but I had chosen to drag him to Morocco on this trip, in search of a snake charmer [he laughed loudly], I still have the snake charmer instrument! I'll show you sometime. That was my quest on this trip, was to find a real snake charmer! Since I had dragged Joe to Morocco, it was his turn to drag me to Rome, where he wanted me to see the real statue of the Pieta, which is the Virgin Mary holding the body of Christ right after they took him off the cross. And he's right across the lap, Michelangelo. [This was] just a very moving, beautiful sculpture. And I got just transfixed by that statue and I couldn't pull myself away from it and I didn't know why and I was just in awe of the beauty of that statue. And Joe is going, "Come on, come on!" So um, so you're hearing a little bit more than you probably asked for, but this is the true story. Ya know, it has to do with conversion. And on the train up from Rome, back towards Switzerland, we decided that we were going to, that we both needed a little bit of time to ourselves. So we went some different ways for a few days. So I went off to Salzburg by myself, and I don't remember where Joe went. I think he went to France, but it doesn't matter. And I went to see all the Mozart stuff in Salzburg and then we met up again in Switzerland and it was about time to go home and I said, "Joe, this is it." And he said, "What do you mean this is it?" And I said, "I've decided to become a teacher." And he goes, "WHAT?!" [Ron laughed heartily] "You're career's goin great!" And I said, "I know but I just have this stirring in my heart,

that I, that I want to become a teacher.” And he’s a great friend ya know, he said, “Well why?” And I said, “I can’t really pinpoint it. I don’t understand it, but I think that there’s a lot of troubled kids out there, that are in need and um, I just have this feeling that if I were a teacher maybe I could make a difference with the children in some way.” And he’s one of the few people that understood. He said, “OK I understand, you’ve got my support.” I didn’t get that support from the professional world of music. Everyone thought I was crazy. And the true colors of many of them came out because ya know, a lot of that industry is dog eat dog and you’re friends with people that can do something for you. That’s just the reality of it. And when a lot of people heard that I wanted to be a teacher, well they just had no use for me anymore. And all of a sudden we weren’t friends, so, and some remained friends of course, but many of them didn’t. Anyways, so I went back to college to get my teaching credential and um,

Carrie: And how many years from the time you graduated to when you went back?

Ron: It was seven years. I continued to play professionally to a point, ya know, letting go little by little [he said with a wink and a nod] for the first three or four years of teaching. I was in the Ventura Symphony, which is about an hour north of here, north of L.A. And I loved that orchestra, partly because it was a weekend getaway. They’d have Friday night rehearsals and Saturday concerts and we’d stay in a hotel. And that was one of my things, kind of like a little vacation. I kept that for years, and did a few gigs, but basically I just released things, gave it away to other people, backed out of the T.V. stuff, and I didn’t accept any solo things, nothing. I wanted to be a teacher. And you know, you can’t be true to yourself if you aren’t true to your heart, so ok? And I was a really abused child also. And I’ve never forgotten how it feels to be physically pounded on and kicked by my father, and to see the blood of my siblings on the walls of our house, and our mother. I don’t forget that, and there’s a lot of that right here in Pico Rivera, so many of these kids just get beat to a pulp by their parents, some of the ones that you know. And I never forgot that, so I just felt like it was a calling. OK, I made my dream come true, now I’m going to go back and see if I can be the person that’s there for those that are in that same situation. So I am ended up here in Pico Rivera. And this school was, at the time it was just run by gangs. You wouldn’t recognize it. There was graffiti everywhere. There were fires almost daily in the bathrooms. I was afraid 23 years ago, I was afraid to walk alone from the band room to the office. Most of my kids were in gangs at the time. I won’t take one ounce of credit the school being cleaned up, its not me, its

uh, they dealt with it and they changed administrators, and they've cleaned all of that up. But my first group of kids was at rough as it gets [he winked] and when they blew into their instruments and the air would go through the instruments, the air would begin to smell like marijuana and their eyes would be glowing red. So, it was that bad. And so I went to work on this. I just really, really patiently was working and paying my dues. A lot of frustration, and we began to find success and the community became really proud of the success and things started to turn here. And it took me about um, ahh the first three years were just building years and then in the fourth year we went out to a parade and we won the sweepstakes and the whole thing, and everyone went crazy. They cried, they hugged each other. They just went crazy, that this could happen to, to North Park. And from there on we only won every event. In my first year we got in some parades and we won first place in the parade and they went wild over that, but this was at a concert festival. Because at the time they had cut everything, all of sports, every activity out of the schools and band was the only thing that there was. And I had 18 kids. And by the springtime of course I had a lot more. But we did a concert festival and the kids got one superior rating and two excellents. And from there we never got anything but a superior rating from any judge ever. But when they got valued it averaged out to an excellent rating, ya know, and I bought all the kids a little medal. And we were on the bus coming back, and the kids were so proud, and someone in the back of the bus screamed out 'Give me an N!' and all the kids screamed back 'N' and he shouted, 'give me an O!' and tears filled up in every ones eyes and they realized they were cheering finally for North Park Middle School, which had, there had been no reason for many years since they cut out football and everything, and they were cheering for their school! Very emotional, and of course I had them in the palm of my hand by then, because they wanted more. And so news spread fast and by the end of or of the beginning of my fourth year someone had nominated me for the Disney American Teacher Awards and I became a national finalist. Which means that Disney, and they held the American teacher awards in Florida, and Disney paid for the band to go to DisneyWorld, that was huge. It was just amazing. Free trip, for the whole band. And they were on international T.V. They filmed, they actually made a small film about the North Park Band and they filmed them marching through DisneyWorld and then the theater that they hold the American Teacher Awards in, they started with a film on the screen of the band marching through DisneyWorld and you see them approaching the theater, and all of a sudden the *real* band members comes marching down the aisles and up on the stage [he lauged], only Disney. It was really, really beautiful. I was the runner up. And looking back I'm so grateful that I



didn't win, because I've had my time of struggling with ego. And I'm so grateful of course that we got that opportunity, but also that I didn't win that national award because, well I don't know what would have become of me. I don't think, I don't know, I mean I would have just thought too highly of myself and been out of control. I'm so, I'm really grateful it worked out the way it did. So we continued to build our concert and parade bands to a really high level, a really, really high level. And in my sixth year we were playing Charles Carter's *Overture for Winds*. We've done it two times, once then and once later. Also we played the Phillip Bliss *Hymnsong* and we played *Toccatta* by Frank Erickson. And it was just, oh fire, fireworks, it was smoke coming off the fingers. And so those were some of the big things that we played in those years. And anyways, the president of the Tournament of Roses, they have a new president every year, but the one that was going to be president for the 1997 Rose Parade had seen us on the Disneyland American Teacher Awards. And when he'd seen us he thought, "Wouldn't it be great to have a middle school in the rose parade?" And I had actually sent applications into the Tournament of Roses and had always been told "No we don't allow middle schools in the rose parade." Well he had it in his head that he would like us to come. And, we had to wait, I didn't know this, but that was in the cards for us, we were waiting our turn. And so every year I'd turn in my application. Finally, so finally I'm contacted that William Johnstone wants to meet with me in the tournament house. And I thought, "Woaaaa, ok" [he laughed heartily]. I put on my tie, [he laughed loudly], I go down there and he just wanted to know, because it's a six mile parade, he wanted to know how they, how I was going to get a middle school band to march for six miles. And I don't think I've ever talked to you about my mountain climbing, but I was pretty buffed out at the time, and climbing some big mountains. [In] 1992 I climbed Kilimanjaro and in 96 I was planning to climb the Matterhorn in Switzerland. And I'd done Mt. Rainer in Washington, Orazabo in Mexico, a lot, and ya know what [I told them?] I'm gonna use mountain climbing technique to train them physically. We're going to go on hikes and long walks and I'll have them ready. He didn't give me a commitment, but after a while we got a call that he wanted to visit the band. So I had a pretty good idea, ya know, that we were really, but with nothing sure, I didn't know. So there was an appointment, we decided ok, so I told the kids, "This is *big*, middle schools never, never played the Rose Parade and this would be huge for our city. Just really big, and you guys would make history in marching band, if you would get this." So we came up with a plan that we would absolutely clean every little corner of the band room and the kids painted a big picture that said, "Welcome Tournament of Roses" and that when he came through the door

they would all be standing at attention in their parade uniforms with their instruments up. And we sent the drum major down to greet him, and she was fantastic and she greets him and says, "I'm going to be your hostess today and I'll walk you in." It was all planned out really, really good. And so they came through the door and the band stood at just amazing perfect attention. And he was blown away by this. He just didn't expect that kind of a greeting. Plus the drum major was in uniform greeting him. And so we talked a little and we said we'd like to march for him. And so we went out there and he followed us out there. And there was a little girl who was only in fourth grade carrying a flag in the very back corner and her shoelace was untied. It was the only thing out of place! And there's a whole committee of tournament people. And they fell in love with Lisa, the little girl with her shoelace untied. And so um, we came back into the room and of course they had marched fabulous and played fabulous and I had seen that one of the tournament [committee members] had had like a special flag, like a white flag with gold trim and I was like, "We're invited to the rose parade!" Well what happened was, was amazing. President Johnstone walked up to the front of the band and he said, "On behalf," and that's all he had to say, no one *heard* the rest of it. [he laughed loudly] The kids SCREAMED, and they started to cry and they leaped out of their chairs and they started hugging him, they mobbed him. Now I'm not gonna exaggerate, this mobbing and screaming and crying went on for more than an hour. I'm not exaggerating, it went on for more than an *hour*. It was that emotional. This was *Pico Rivera*. And the noise was so loud people from the other side of campus were goin', "What's goin' on? We're lookin', kids are crying, what did you do to them?" News spread quickly that a middle school was going to be in the *Rose Parade*. And it was just an amazing energy, an outpouring of love and gratitude that day that anyone in that room could never, never forget. And it was like ok, North Park Band is here. And so they have an event called Bandfest, which is [where] all the high school bands [selected to be in the Rose Parade] do their field show. It's a three-day event and they split the bands so that some go each day. And so they said, "Do you want to do Bandfest?" And I said, "What's that?" And I said, "Oh we're not a field band." But I said, "Yes we'll do it" [he chuckled]. So I went to the mayor and I had him burn a temporary football field into the park for us, he gave us yard lines [I'm laughing hysterically because of how unbelievable I feel this story is and he's laughing too]. So we put on an actual field show. It was *very* simple, but it was also very, very appropriate for middle school. And so of course I develop all of my projects, so in order to develop this project I entered some field tournament competitions. And the high schools you can do this, you'll just be the lowest division high school. We won 2<sup>nd</sup> place! [he

laughed hysterically] Two times! And the color guard won first! We went all the way to Palm Springs to be in a field competition and we won second place! I mean I didn't expect anything. I was just trying to make sure they'd be their best for the Tournament of Roses! And it worked, they were, they were really good. And again, they captured every one's hearts, ya know, the little guys. We ended with the song *Wish Upon a Star* and we released balloons at the end. And it was very cute ya know, and we did *It's a Small World* and we brought in extra kids in international costumes and they danced and sang. So ya know, it was very appropriate to little kids. And the year after that was um, I just had this amazing concert band. And parade band. We did this march called *Chimes of Liberty*.

Carrie: And was this 1997-98 now?

Ron: Yea, and the band was just phenomenal, just phenomenal. And Joe Lawson wrote us a piece of music that was just really exciting, really exciting music. And he was commemorating my Kilimanjaro climb and so he, the very tip of Kilimanjaro is called Uhuru Peak, and so he called it *Uhuru Peak*. He was very touched by it because I had climbed to the top of Uhuru Peak for the band kids. And when I would go on a big climb I would have them all sign a document and I would leave it at the top of the mountain. [I remarked, "Oh neat, that's so neat."] Yea, so they would all be back at home knowing I was climbing this mountain for them. And I climbed the Matterhorn for them also. In fact I've got to show you something. [He goes into a closet behind his desk takes out a bowl of rocks.] Here, take one. They are, I'm really stingy with these. These are from the top of the Matterhorn, so I'm very stingy. Years go by where I don't give any away. But I'll give them to an extremely troubled kid, an extremely troubled. Ya know, one that will be sitting hear just crying their eyes out in absolute despair. And I tell them the story of my Matterhorn climb and I give them a rock and I say, "Hold this in your hand, I'm going to tell you a story. And after the story is over I'll tell you where the rock is from." And I still get emails from students long ago that say, "I still have my rock." And so Joe was very touched by that and so he wrote the music that he called *Uhuru Peak*. It was *beautiful* music. And people would joke with me, "What are you going to do to top the Rose Parade?" And *jokingly*, just joking, I said, "Well, Carnegie Hall!" But there was no hope to play at Carnegie. And then, I don't know where I saw this, but I saw an ad for the National Band Festival in Carnegie Hall. And I'm goin, "Hmmm maybe I'm not just joking." And so I started calling, and the guy laughed at me and he said, "We're not letting a middle school band in." And so I said,

“OK.” and I waited a few months and I called again and I said, “John? It’s Ron Wakefield again.” And he said, “We’re still not letting middle schools in.” We had a recording session of this *Uhuru Peak* thing and *The Chimes of Liberty*, if I can find a copy I’ll play it for you. But finally it was the year before we went to Carnegie hall [1998-99], I called again, asked for John. And they said, “Well he’s, he’s on a, he’s traveling right now, but I can give you his cell phone number!” [He laughed hysterically] And ya know, ya know he was at Midwest. [we both laughed hysterically]. And now I’ve got his cell number! And he answers the phone! So of course I called his cell number and I said, “Hi John, it’s Ron Wakefield.” And he said, “Ron, we’re not going to have a middle school!” And I said, “John you want me to stop bugging you don’t you?” He goes, “Yes, we’re not gonna let you in.” And I go, “OK John, OK listen. I’ll stop bugging you, but I want you to promise me one thing.” And he goes, “ANYTHING!” [he laughed hysterically] I said, “Just let me send you a tape. And, and just give me your promise that you’ll listen to it for one minute, just *one* minute and if you listen to it for one minute and you don’t like it, call me and say never and I will never bother you again.” Because you see, now we had this recording of *Uhuru Peak* and *The Chimes of Liberty*. He said, “You’ve got yourself a deal.” I sent him the tape and he called back and said, “We’d like to invite you to Carnegie Hall!” And we’ve been friends ever since. So that was just huge. That was *bigger* than the Rose Parade. And I told you the story, ya know, how Battisti came down and Reynolds and all that. And there was one other part, when all that was over and we were out trying to get back on the bus, John came out too and I said “How’d you like our performance John?” And he goes, he goes, “uhh, uhh I have no words for this.” And I said, “Can we come back some day?” And he said, “You um, you are the only band that never has to even send an audition tape. That was so amazing [he said], “you just call me and you’re in.” So I’ve never had to send an audition tape, I just call John and he says, “When ya comin?” [he chuckled] Because we’ve *always* delivered beautifully in Carnegie Hall. So that was just huge. That was *bigger* than the Rose Parade. (I responded, “Right, and that was 2000?”) Yea, that was 2000. Then the school district did something that I hated. It was meant well but they don’t know my feelings about it. And that was that they dedicated, you’ve seen the plaque out there, they dedicated this music room to me. And they don’t know what they put me through by doing that, in terms of jealousy on the campus. The jealousy was really, really hard. There were times when I just wanted to rip that thing off and throw it away. But ya know, they’d just put another one up. And so they did make a big deal about it. But on the other hand, they were really proud of

us. And so um, I had to let that happen. And I asked them not to do it and they said, “No we’re doin it.”

Carrie: Can you tell me the story again about what happened immediately after you guys got done playing in Carnegie Hall with Battisti and Reynolds?

Ron: Oh, as we, they had us come down this big freight elevator down to the bottom floor where we’d left our instrument cases and our personal things. And we were getting ready to go out the exit to the bus, and the stage manager came running up and she had tears in her eyes and she said, “Wait, you’ve got to wait!” And I said, “No, we’ve got to go get on our bus.” And she said, “You don’t understand, Maestro Battisti wants to meet you!” And I said, [he chuckled], “Oh ok, I guess we should wait for that!” [he laughed loudly] Well they have a conductors’ dinner the night before the concert with the adjudicators, and I didn’t go to it. I’ve never gone to it. In later years I’ve sent my assistants to it so they could have that experience. But so ah, Battisti comes down and he piled on the compliments and he was hitting me with his cane on the shoulder. [He laughed], and that was great. He was just really moved by middle school kids playing so deeply from the heart as they did, and so beautifully, and that it was very challenging music. And so he left, and we went to leave again, and up runs the stage manager again and she says, “You have to wait!” I’m goin, “We’ve really got to go. We’ve got to get to a reception!” And she says, “But you don’t understand, Maestro Reynolds is coming down, he wants to meet you!” [He laughed again], So I said, “OK, we can wait.” So down he comes and he piles on the compliments. And he, on his adjudication form, you see there are no awards there, just comments from some of the leading band guys in the world. And on his judges sheet he wrote, “You’ve just set a new standard for” Ummm, I think [he said] “middle school education.” And I thought, “Wowwww!” And he *said* that to me. And so he left, and now we’ve *really* got to leave, [he laughed]. And up comes the stage manager, and she says, “Now the other two are coming down.” [he laughed again] OK, well, great, it was a great honor. And then the stage manager got really emotional. And she just said, “I’m just so emotional, this has *never* happened, this is a first.” And the audience had broken down in tears. We were close to the end of the concert and there was a little solo and the girl let a little squeak out, and the way the audience members described it to me was, “The band was playing so beautifully and we were all so entranced in the beauty of this performance and it was like when the little girl squeaked, it was like we all felt, oh their human, and they’re so little!” And it was a quiet part that then builds up to a big crescendo ending, and the audience started to weep as they realized

they had just been lost in this dream world of these little kids playing so beautifully and by the end of the concert everyone was in tears, including the band. There's a final flute solo and Lisa played it and ya know, I could hear her sniffing, and I'm conducting and I'm like, "Not now!" [he chuckled]. And, but it was really hard to contain and somehow we got to the end of the music and then the kids just broke down. It was, it was just ah, what could they do? They just cried and cried.

Carrie: And this was your tenth year here by this point?

Ron: Yea, uh huh, that was my tenth year. So ya know, we continued with our tours. We'd been to Hawaii, we'd been on a Mexican cruise ship, to New York City, the next year we went to Canada, to Vancouver. We were going to go to London in 2002 but September 11<sup>th</sup> happened and we cancelled that. We ended up going to Disney World. And for 2004 I decided it was time to go back to Carnegie Hall and that's where we went and we played at the Cabrini Home Orphanage.

Carrie: And why did you decide to schedule a concert at the Cabrini Home?

Ron: I did that, not intending for the result that came out. I should call myself selfish. My only intent, my intent was not an outreach, my only intent, and I'm ashamed of that now, it wasn't to reach out, it was to schedule a pre-Carnegie Hall performance. So, I've given you my confession now [he chuckled], it was selfish. I just was scheduling a pre-Carnegie Hall performance in New York before we hit the Carnegie Hall stage. But it turned out to be so emotional. There were seniors there plus some orphan children. And I was told that some of the kids there had been orphaned over September 11<sup>th</sup> and they were being sheltered at the Cabrinin Home [I replied, "ohh, geeze."]. And the concert turned out to be life changing. I was just amazed that I was so affected by that concert. Umm, my 2004 Carnegie Hall concert is like a blur to me, the other ones are so clear, but the 2004 Carnegie Hall, and even the photographer messed up

Carrie: I was *just going to say*, is that the photo that's missing?! The one that was blurry?!

Ron: Yea, Yea! They messed up the photo, so we don't have a good photograph of that concert, and it's kind of appropriate. Because my memory of that concert is kind of a big blur. But the Cabrini Home concert was, was really important to me.

Carrie: And to your students, do you think?

Ron: And to my students, they loved it, they *loved* it. And it was just like the ones you see, they *visited!* [I replied, “They did?”] They played and then they went out and visited their audience.

Carrie: Wow, they did? Was that your idea, do you think at that point?

Ron: I think so, but aah, there we were. *No*, it wasn't, it was that the Cabrini Home, they said that they'd provide refreshments. They had put out cookies and punch and stuff. It was *their* idea. And so I was really excited about approaching the Cabrini Home because I had visited there, but the idea is that the *intent* was not to play an outreach. It was selfishly just to have a performance in New York. And it turned out that it was going to change a lot of things. So, in 2002 I joined the Franciscan Order. So you see, I was on my way. I was on a very deep spiritual journey. And I forget who even mentioned the Cabrini Home, but I think it had to do with something through the Franciscan. It's just that I was getting deeper and deeper into my spiritual journey, and there's an openness that led me to this Cabrini Home. So after that, that was in April of 2004 and in May of 2004 a Franciscan kept badgering me to attend a retreat. And I kept saying, “No, I'm not going to attend it.” And he said, “You've got to,” “No, no.” But then at the last moment, like in my head, “OK I should go. He's telling me over and over maybe I should see what this is about.” So I called to see if they still had room and they did and so, it was up in Malibu, so it was a drive up there. And the keynote speakers for the weekend retreat were the directors of the Isaiah House Homeless Shelter. And they just told stories about working with the homeless and um, and I felt very quiet. I didn't talk to anyone, I felt like something was going on inside me. But I didn't understand what it was. And I just remained quiet, and a few weeks later, I'd been to Mass in the morning, I had come home and was just sitting there about to enjoy a Sunday afternoon of peace and quiet, a cup of coffee. And all of a sudden I just turned to the phone and dialed the Isaiah House, with no thought about it. And I said, “Can I come down and visit?” So I drove down there, and the woman who was the wife of the husband wife team of directors, took me on a tour and introduced me to some of the homeless people. I was very reserved about it, because I'd never met homeless people. But we walk out there and we're standing out looking at this driveway in the back yard, and I can picture the band there, I could just picture them. And I said, “How'd you like a band concert?” And she said, “Are you serious, really?! We've never had anything like *that*.” And I

said, “Yea lets plan that, lets do a Christmas concert, it will give me time to plan this.” [Here we had to stop because a class entered.]

Carrie: So we left off when you walked into the backyard of the Isaiah House and said, “Do you want to have a band concert back here?”

Ron: So yea anyways, I walked down into that backyard and at the doorway, I could picture the band sitting there. And without a thought, I mean this whole day was so spontaneous, so without a thought I just blurted out, “How’d you like a band?” And yea she said, “Oh we’ve never had anything like that.” And so we planned it for Christmas, so we’d have a Christmas concert. And then I started asking, “Well what kinds of things could we do?” Ya know, I explained what I do as a middle school music teacher and what kinds of things could I do here, ya know bring my kids down and serve that could help and benefit you. And she said, “Well what we don’t have, what I don’t have is a way of celebrating birthdays.” So we talked about starting this birthday program because that was probably June and the Christmas concert was going to be the following Christmas time. So I had another about a six-month period of time where we still hadn’t performed there but I started taking kids to do these birthday celebrations. And that was just a way, and I’d just take a carload of kids and that evolved, like all things, I didn’t know what I was doing at first. And each person at the beginning got one present, but it grew into a thing where each person would get a lot of presents. And we had ice cream and we had a cake and we sang happy birthday one time to all of the people. And then of course it evolved to where we’d just walk around the yard and find whoever it was and crowd around them and they got their individual birthday sang to them. Either way, it worked and it was wonderful. And that was our introduction to working with the homeless. And then by the time it was time to do a Christmas concert everyone was excited because they’d heard stories about the Isaiah house and they were looking forward to the Christmas Concert. And we sat there playing, we didn’t hand out the words and say, “OK, we’re gonna do *Silent Night* again,” like we do now. But we did play a number of Christmas carols and a bunch of the homeless crowded in real close and they just started singing without us asking them to, like some of the people the other night, and it was really, really touching. They were doing that, and of course I was conducting all of the stuff at the time because I hadn’t released any of that. But we still had some beautiful, really beautiful really life changing things. And it was a beginning of a new direction

Carrie: And was it at that concert that the girl climbed up on the students lap?



Ron: No that one came a little bit later, that was the next one. It was the following spring.

Carrie: Ok, so then in the spring that happened, and was that also when Tiffany came up to you?

Ron: Yea, yea. Tiffany's birthday is in April. So we had the Christmas concert, next April we had the birthday celebration I described...[and we hadn't included Tiffany in the celebration and her mom came up and asked me why we hadn't included her.] And I said well, "I've got all the names of the people they gave me, but who's your daughter?" And she goes, "That's Tiffany over there." And she goes, "Yea will that's because we just arrived so probably..." And so I went up to Tiffany, and I said, "So what is your name?" And she's like real, real humble, "Tiffany," and I said, "Well Tiffany, I didn't know it was your birthday, but I'd be glad to come back with some birthday presents. What would you like?" And that's where you see humility, humility is a weakness to me. I will always, if someone's humble, I'll completely cave in to them. I see it as just the highest human quality, to be truly humble. And it's so elusive to be humble, and should one be humble, the moment one would take credit for humility, they've fallen completely from humility. But with great humility she says, "Oh I'd just appreciate anything." She didn't know how she spoke to me. Anyways so I started working, "So what kinds of things do you like?" "Oh anything," she says. After a while I finally got it out that she liked to color, she liked art, she liked princesses, she liked Tinkerbell. So I thought, "OK, I'll go to downtown Disneyland and I'll get her some Tinkerbell things and maybe some art supplies. Well she walked back up to me and she said, "I know something I would like for my birthday." And I was finally happy about that. She said, "Um, a can of spray paint." [He chuckled], she's in fourth grade. In California in fourth grade, all kids study the settlement of the state of California and an important part of California history is the Franciscan movement up from Mexico into California to settle missions. And there are twenty-somethin' missions all over the state of California. They're beautiful. Really, ya gotta go see one sometime. And it was led by a Franciscan priest named Father Junípero Serra. He was just proclaimed a saint in the last year by Pope Benedict. Anyways, so all fourth graders in public schools, well it's the one religious thing they have to do, although its not presented as religious, but they have to study the missions and the teachers always assign them, and they do, they build a model of a mission. So Tiffany, ya know, I said, "Spray paint?" And she said, "Well I'm doing my mission project." And I said, "Well, will you

show it to me? I'd love to see it." She takes me by the hand, and she leads me to the side of the house. And there's this, it looks like a little shack. And she's putting it together with trash. She's digging stuff out of the trashcan. And that's the best she can do. And she said, "If I had some spray paint it would look nicer." And I said, "Well Tiffany, I'll bring you some spray paint." And this was on a Sunday night and the mission project was due the next day. I said I can't get spray paint, but I'll bring some tomorrow. She didn't tell me it was due the next day. Turns out she didn't go to school the next day, because she was afraid to turn in the trashy mission project. But she was *waiting* for me. She was sitting on the front porch waiting for me to show up. And she was gonna bring her mission in on Tuesday. The girl that, drew that ok, [he gestures to a picture drawn by a child], I told her we were going to go work with a little girl, and so I took her down there and we shopped and got all kinds of stuff and by late Monday evening, Tiffany had this beautiful mission. We even bought her a little cross to put, and I even had a little statue this tall [he gestures with his fingers], of Father Serra. No one had that! And I brought some little prayer cards to make it like stained glass windows on the inside of her mission. She just had this gorgeous mission by the time we were done, and of course she got an "A+". And so that started this friendship between me and Tiffany. And in May, which was probably only about two weeks later, we were playing a spring concert there, and we were going to go to Canada the next week, so we decided we'd go play them a concert before we went to Canada. And that's where the little girl climbed up on the flute players lap, and that's where Tiffany approached me.

Carrie: OK so you had already really known Tiffany at that point, I hadn't realized that.

Ron: Well for about three weeks [I replied, "Oh, so not that long then."] No, but enough where she felt comfortable to approach me. And yea that's why so quickly, because I really already loved this girl a lot, and yea she came up and said, "I'd give anything if I could do what they do." And my heart just melted and that was the beginning. That was the beginning of the music outreach. She then, she um, and Dave [the director of the Isaiah House] told me, because I was still getting used to working with the homeless and I said, "Dave what's going to happen with this girl?" And he goes, "Do you want the real hardcore truth?" And I said, "Yea, tell me the truth, what will become of her?" "Well she has no choice, but she's a pretty girl, so she's going to be a high end prostitute. That's the only choice she's got." And I thought, "Well that can't happen, not Tiffany." So I enrolled

her in private school. [He and I both chuckled.] I talked to her mom and I took her down there. And I said, "I don't care what it costs, if I could, if I could just make a difference to one kid like this, I don't care what it costs." And that's why somewhere up there [he gestures to a large, professional photo of Tiffany in a black gown holding a clarinet with a note from her to Ron written on the mat.] She says thank you for putting me in St. Joseph's school. And they gave me a pretty good discount. They understood the situation. But I sponsored her through school, and she's going to graduate from high school this year. And that's a miracle, and of course she went to Hawaii with us and she went to China with us (I responded, "Yea, and Carnegie Hall!") Yea and Carnegie Hall. Her mom had this drunk, brutal boyfriend. And we were sitting on the front porch of the Isaiah House having a little clarinet lesson. We were sitting playing duets from the beginning pages, *Jolly Old St. Nicholas*. And all of a sudden a fight broke out in the Isaiah House and we could hear Dave and her mom's boyfriend, we heard glass break he'd smashed a big mirror, and we could hear Dave screaming, "You've got to get your stuff and get out of here." And she looked up at me, and she said, "Mr. Wakefield, I don't think I'm ever going to see you again." And I said, "No, it'll work out Tiffany." And she said, "Can we play one more song?" And because she knew that the next thing was they were gonna walk out, and we played we played *Jolly Old St. Nicholas*, and then she looked up at the sky and she said, "God thank you." And so then out walked her mom and her mom's boyfriend and her brothers and she put her clarinet away and they walked down the street.

Carrie: But you've seen her again right?!

Ron: Oh yea I've seen her, but oh yea, she didn't take her clarinet. She didn't take it for some reason that's right. They must have left to fast or something. I don't know why she didn't take her clarinet. But I put it in the trunk of my car, and then we were having an event with our homeless kids and this was before I put her in the private school, but we were playing in a solo ensemble festival with homeless kids [I chuckled] and it was the day of the festival and Tony [a parent chaperone, the gentleman who gave the 'former band parent' interview] had gone down to pick up the homeless kids, and Tiffany was there. And he knew how much I'd like to see Tiffany. She didn't have a clarinet, but I'm sitting there at the table and Tiffany's standing there at the doorway and she comes running in, and other kids are coming in with their instruments. And she says, "I just came I know I cant play." And after lots of hugs, I said, "Come walk out to my car with me." [Tears were streaming down my face at this point in the

story.] And she threw her arms around me, and I said, “We’re gonna work real hard and you’re gonna play today. You, I don’t care if you play wrong notes, you’re gonna perform today.” And she was so happy, and she played [I laughed and replied, “Oh my gosh that is amazing.”] Yea, yea I looked up and there she was. And after that yea, I basically adopted her. I had her baptized, so I’m her Godfather. She hasn’t followed through a whole lot, but she will, she will. She’s still in touch with Dave too, she’s just doing her high school thing and she’s trying to find herself and I have to give her her space, but she, she really wants to find herself. Who she really is and she’ll come around. There will be a day where she’ll be standing there again. (I asked, “And is she still homeless?”) No, they’re not, they don’t live in a good home, but it’s a home and she’s getting through high school, and she’s gonna graduate. So yea, um I could go on. There’s many, many more stories about Tiffany. [We had to stop again here for a class to enter.]

Carrie: So, where did we leave off? We’ve gone through the first and second Carnegie concerts, right, so now we’re getting ready to get into the 3<sup>rd</sup> Carnegie Concert?

Ron: The very first outreach was in 2004 at the Cabrini Home. Then I met the Isaiah people, started doing concerts. I met Tiffany, who asked me if I’d teach her music. And then this little homeless shelter band formed. And a lot of kids came through that program. A lot of kids were not really long term homeless, but as soon as they’d get dropped off in a homeless shelter, then we’d snatch them up and keep them busy playing music. So there were many, many homeless children. And I ended up supplying a lot of instruments (I asked, “Out of your own pocket?”) A lot of them yea. And some of them would be there for three months or so and move on and I’d let them keep the instruments in hopes that wherever they would end up that they’d join a band program. Sometimes we’d hear back from them that they did! And sometimes we wouldn’t hear back at all, but that’s fine.

Carrie: So right away after Tiffany, then the Isaiah band formed. Do you mean that then you started taking your kids out to teach lessons?

Ron: Yea I started taking kids out to teach music lessons.

Carrie: And at that point, were there any parents that said they weren’t comfortable with that?

Ron: Never, well one. One was uncomfortable after a while. I have only had one parent, in all of this outreach, be negative in anyway. And I showered that person with goodness and it just didn't work.

Carrie: So the next trip was 2007. So you'd been working with these kids at the Isaiah House and you said to your North Park kids, lets take the homeless kids with us to Carnegie?

Ron: Yea, yea the idea came up about a year ahead of time. And people thought I was crazy of course. Take them to Carnegie hall? And I just knew that I could.

Carrie: So right away you had to start figuring out how you were going to raise the money for your kids to go *and* these other kids?

Ron: Exactly, and that was before the recession hit so fundraising was not difficult. And it really wasn't a struggle to get the six kids to Carnegie Hall. Everyone, *everyone* was on board. They were, except that one parent. That one, and that parent didn't scream very loud, ya know just talked a little bit and tried to undermine it a little bit. But the other parents are goin', "You're crazy, this is beautiful." And so that parent ended up being quiet. And yet I tried really hard to turn their attitude because we had some activities getting really close to Carnegie Hall where we'd have some Friday night things and something Saturday also, so I saw opportunity to develop families. I mean this is another [aspect]. Six families could have a [homeless] kid stay in their home. They just loved it, and it was good for their kids to shelter a homeless child and it was all positive except for one family. Their screaming couldn't do any damage to us, so I didn't take them seriously. Except I tried to turn their attitudes, but it didn't work. So yea, that was another component of this. The students got to shelter homeless kids. But ya know, people would just walk up and give me hundred dollar bills. Ya know, and they said, "Put this towards your homeless kids." And the fundraising went pretty much like that, really easy, really easy. We had to get a whole new wardrobe for the kids, we had to get luggage, we had to give them spending money. I think we gave them about \$150 [each]. And um, on the trip we went, New York City has the world's largest Build-A-Bear, [he chuckled], and it's fun, and they have a restaurant in there. And so I threw a Build-A-Bear party for the whole band. And it was really, really great fun. They got lunch, they got a cookie they had to decorate, so they got a Build-A-Bear cookie desert, and it was really, really fun. But I gave the homeless kids Build-A-Bear gift cards to make sure that they would spend their money on the bear.

Because otherwise, ya know being homeless, some of the kids would just hold onto the money, some would save it to give it to their parents. Anytime I'd give them money for something, sometimes they wouldn't spend it. They'd take it to their parents. So I had to learn that also.

Carrie: So this concert at Carnegie Hall had these six homeless children with you. And they were playing regular instruments with you, just sitting right in with the band? [He replied, "Yea, yea uh huh."] And did the audience members even know that that was going on?

Ron: The audience didn't know that they were homeless and the adjudicators didn't know either. And so at that time, and they were featured on a piece of music and it was magical for all of us, but not so much for the audience because the homeless kids were out of tune, and the adjudicators, ya know were, "Ya gotta, what happened?" And so they didn't quite understand what was going on in that concert, but we did, and that's what was important. And the rest of the concert was really beautiful. But the six kids had a solo part, all of them, and it was out of tune, ya know, it was shaky. And they were *scared* up there! But they did come through, they played. It was just that they had a different tone quality and intonation than the rest of the band. But it was still a huge success.

Carrie: And you were still conducting everything on that concert?

Ron: I conducted most of it. I had an assistant and, no I conducted a lot of it. We had a bass clarinet solo with a brother who was in high school, he conducted one piece for bass clarinet solo and then Lisa conducted *Ave Maria* and I think I conducted the rest. And yea, that was a gradual thing also, to let go [of my conducting] and in our 2010 Carnegie Hall performance [the fourth concert at Carnegie Hall], it still wasn't in my head to let go of all of the conducting until we were approaching [the concert]. Ya know it's like the ideas come to me in bits and pieces. But I didn't conceive this concert as what it was gonna be, but every time I let go, I was more happy. And I was going to do one final, I was going to do just one thing. And I had like, about seven conductors for that [fourth] Carnegie Hall and I was still going to conduct one piece. But then, it was January, and the concert was [going to be] in April and a student, a former student who was just really lost, a girl who was about 25 at the time, she had loved music, she was meant to be in music and she had gotten really, just sidetracked and messed up and she was miserable. Lisa kept telling me, [about a former student who was having some trouble. Ron worked with this student and as a reward for her enrolling herself in college, Ron

allowed her to conduct in Carnegie Hall] And that was 2010 Carnegie Hall, and with that I released all of conducting and I could see that this is [an opportunity], I had an eighth-grader conducting and I could see, “Wow, ya know this is a new direction I could go. I could start having kids do a lot more conducting, why should I conduct when theres, ya know.”

Carrie: So now, by this point you have kids teaching other kids, teaching homeless kids lessons, you have kids conducting. Did you have kids teaching other North Park kids at this point?

Ron: We had just started, beginning band happens in the summer. I mean beginning, really beginning with ya know, whole notes. It starts in the summer and all of the advanced kids come down and they’re paired one on one. I direct the lessons to an extent. Ya know, I get up there because I wanna make sure the new kids have heard it professionally also. But I’ll get up there on the board and I’ll chart things out for them, and I’ll say ya know, whole note, four beats. And then I’ll say ok now teachers you reinforce that, and then its one on one to check understanding. [We stopped again for a class that was entering.]

Carrie: Let’s get the last of this history and then we can move on. So tell me about how you came up with the idea for the 2010 Carnegie concert to get all these kids from up and down the East Coast to perform with you.

Ron: OK yea. In the summer of 2009, early in the summer I had this idea because we had had Joe Lawson write *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star* and *Mary Had a Little Lamb* with recorders, so I had this idea to, to get recorder players and do this and I thought, “Wow what if we could get recorder players on the East Coast?” And I was just thinking, “How is this going to happen? Where do I start?” And I was here one weekend and in walks Beth, who is [a former student] now in the Coast Guard. And her husband, both of them in the Coast Guard. And I kind of fathered Beth through middle school and high school and even through the Coast Guard. So anyways, I had this idea of getting this recorder thing together and, oh Beth is the one there between [those two children] on the wall. [He gestured to a framed photo.] And in they walk, and they’ve got their baby with them and everything. And I said, “Wow I thought you were in Oakland!” And she said, “Well we got transferred and we’re going to Baltimore and I wanted to introduce my husband to you and I want to show you my baby and everything.” So we sat there and had this nice visit and um, mostly about her, but then when she said, “Well how are you doing?” I said, “Well this is what we’re doin’. We’re going to Carnegie hall

again and I have this idea. I want to get some recorder, I gotta find some people out on the East Coast to teach recorder. I don't know where I'm gonna start." And she said, "Can I do it?!" [He laughed loudly,] and I wasn't thinking that way! But I think, ya know that was all meant to be and immediately I could see, "Wow, what healing for Beth." Ya know, that she could participate in this. And she was always a great musician, and she's been through incredible hardships in her life, amazing hardships. So anyways, then she goes to Baltimore for the Coast Guard. And she goes into the projects, I mean fearlessly, and there are her kids there [he points to the photo labeled "Baltimore"] that Baltimore frame there. Those were the hardest core kids of all, the Baltimore project kids. And I'd go out to visit her and she's sitting at a Boys & Girls Club, which was their rehearsal hall, and she'd told them, "You guys, you gotta, you gotta practice Mr. Wakefield is gonna be here!" [We both chuckled.] And I walk in [he laughed again] and the kids are sitting there and then I'm like looking in a mirror or something and she's goin, "Come on now, on the edge of your chair, get your feet flat on the floor, long tones, ready? 1, 2..." [He laughed loudly], on recorders! [He laughed again]. So that was amazing. I think she was only 21 at the time and um, and she put together the tour from Baltimore. Cuz ya know she had to get them in a hotel and transport them and she had to take chaperons and parents and she had to raise the money to take them from Baltimore to N.Y.C. and keep them two or three nights. And I advised her all the way, how to do this, how to run a tour. And she took them to the Statue of Liberty and ya know um, and it wasn't always easy for her, and sometimes she'd just call in tears ya know, "The parents..." [He and I both laughed] and I'd just say, "Calm down..." And um, I got her Broadway tickets for her group. And it was adorable, she had them in this really fancy restaurant in Times Square and I walked down to see them ya know, and the kids, it was really cute, the kids they were wearing ties, and they're all sitting up and they're eating their dinner [he chuckled], and then they came over and met up with us and went to see Wicked with us. So um, but the other ones,

Carrie: Yea, how'd you get the other ones? You've got Shriners, Harlem, Brooklyn?

Ron: So um, Brooklyn and Harlem, I'd contacted the NY music educators, I forget what their called [NYSSMA] whatever it is, yea, and I'd asked them to send an email blast to all music educators and tell what I was gonna do and was anyone interested to call me. And so yea, I got a call from Harlem and Brooklyn, some teachers, the Brooklyn is just an elementary school where the guy had the right heart to do this and he knew a little bit about



music and I went out and helped him get a little music program started. I traveled out there a number of times. And also Harlem, there was a teacher that was teaching like a general music class, and so again, I went out and pointed her in the right direction and I went out there several times. And so I was on a round there, it was my first trip meeting up with Harlem and Brooklyn and then, since Baltimore was a little bit farther down and I had this relationship with the Shriner's hospital [I replied, "Oh, I see."] Now I intended a true outreach concert. Um, there was nothing selfish about it, like the Cabrini started selfishly, but um, I intended, I made an appt at the Shriner's in Philly to have a concert there. And that was my intent, was just to bring the band in and what I was trying to do was to get a central location that possibly where Beth could bring her kids up from Baltimore and we could get a run through concert before Carnegie Hall. And so that's what I was intending to do. And so as I was meeting with them, and my Shriner's program was going on here, and we were just talking and I told her about what I do here in L.A. and she was like, "Oh I'd LOVE to do somethin' like that here!" And I said, "Well why don't we start that. Um, lets, let me, I bet you that my girl in Baltimore would be willing to help." And I contacted Temple University and I couldn't get an answer back from anyone. And they have this music therapy program there, but I couldn't get a response. And the Shriner's actually has a music therapist and he wouldn't return my call but they said, "He's not very active with us." But anyways, so I talked to Beth and she says, "Yea I'll go up there!" So now she's commuting to Philly and she's teaching these recorder kids. So she's got Baltimore and Philly and I'm kind of ya know, commuting to the East Coast, getting to know these kids and making sure everything's going well. I bought them really, really beautiful recorders. If you look at the pictures, they aren't these plastic things. [I replied, "Oh yea, they're really nice."] And so I was on my last visit, it was the final visit was about the first week of March and the Carnegie hall concert was the first week of April. And so I was on my last round and going to all of the places and everyone was *well* prepared so there wasn't a whole lot to do really, and I took Lisa with me on that trip. And um, on some of the trips I'd meet Beth, I'd get her a room in N.Y. and then we'd have great fun too of course! And um, and I never felt more safe than having a Coast Guard person walking the streets of N.Y. with me, because she'd kick anyone's butt so bad! [He laughed loudly] She was cute, she was very, very cute because I'd be driving from Baltimore to Philly and she'd say, "Promise me you'll call me when you get back to your hotel so I know you're safe." [He laughed again.] Very cute! So anyways, so here we are in March, it's the first week of March and in January was that Haitian earthquake. I was so busy, ya know I didn't listen a whole lot to the news, I was aware of it,

I knew people were collecting money and this and that, but I was really, really busy and I didn't follow the news day by day. And at my church, St. Mary's over here, the one story that had crushed me was, my church is staffed by an order called the Redemptorists and the Redemptorists had a parish in Haiti with a school and the thing that was crushing to me was that every priest, every brother, and every teacher and every student was killed in that earthquake. Absolutely no life at that school. And that was just crushing to me to hear that, but um, so Beth and her husband met me and Lisa in Philly and we worked with the hospital kids there, but there we were and this Haitian girl in a wheelchair with only one leg um, who couldn't speak English, wheels herself up with this big smile, and stops in front of me. She just knew, she knew, "I'm goin' to that dude. Im gonna go say hi. I can't talk to him but I wanna know him." That's what's goin' on in her head, and she had no idea who I was. But so I tried to talk to her ya know, "What's your name?" Ya know, and she goes, "Jolene." And um, so I got the directors and said, "Who is this girl? What's goin' on here?" And then they told me, ya know, and I looked down, and she's missing a leg.

Carrie: So she'd been brought over with the red cross or something?

Ron: Yes, Yes! She had been crushed by a building, left for dead, for several days. Her mother thought she was dead, and her mother cried and cried. But they finally, when they lifted some of the rubble up there, she was breathing. And the Philly hospital was the only place where there was a hospital bed. And they brought many Haitian people to the U.S. to hospitals. I mean they were all over the nation. And Jolene ended up there in Philly. And I said, "Can we teach her recorder too?" So we started teaching her and she was catching on pretty fast. And I went to the director and I said, "Get her in Carnegie Hall. I don't care what it takes. I want her in Carnegie Hall with us." And they said, "Oh my God, Oh my God, that would be so fabulous, ya know let us start, we gotta get, there is SO much red tape to letting her do that!" And I said, "Just do, do whatever you gotta do. I'll pay whatever, I'll do whatever, just get it done, she's gotta go!" I came back to L.A. and a few days later they called to say, "Jolene can go!" And I'm like, "YES!" [He laughed heartily.] That was like ya know, this was just huge that we had Jolene.

Carrie: Had you already told your students about her?

Ron: Yea and I was talking to them and I was sayin, I don't know, I just hope we can get her, showing them pics of her and stuff. And then we got this call and its like, "Wow, she's gonna join us!" And um, I did get one really

amazing moment of happiness. I gave up all of everything for that Carnegie Concert and my job was to stay backstage. And I even assigned a student to push Jolene's wheelchair out on the stage, I said, "You're gonna do this." Because *everything* had to be planned, ya know, how we're gonna do this. But Jolene's a fighter and she'd gotten her artificial leg just one week before the concert. And she hates wheelchairs and so um, she refused to bring a wheelchair to N.Y. [I gasped, "What?! She didn't even bring one?!] She wouldn't even bring one, she brought crutches and her artificial leg. Yup, she wouldn't bring her wheelchair. And so um, so some of the kids had wheelchairs out there and um, and there were kids, but when we came down, the Carnegie stage manager changed the stage plans about how we were going to get to the stage and it turned out all of a sudden we didn't have someone to walk Jolene out on stage. Someone had to walk her with her recorder and her crutches. And so that's what I got to do. And I loved that moment. That was, I go, "Oh thank you God, that's, that's nice."

Carrie: You got to literally walk her on the stage.

Ron: Yes to walk her onto the stage was my great privilege and lead her to her spot and then to get off the stage and get out of the way and let the kids do the show. And I learned a great, amazing thing from that experience. I grew a *lot* then. And from there on, I only conduct in concerts if it's really necessary.

Carrie: And now, so for this concert, you had a lot more kids out there with you that weren't North Park kids, and they all had their recorders. And now, so how did you communicate to the audience who you had with you and what was going on?

Ron: They, it was announced.

Carrie: OK, by the kids or the Carnegie Hall people?

Ron: Um, at the beginning there was an announcement. The director of the music festival just announced which kids where there. He announced that we had a school from Harlem, we had a school from Brooklyn, that we had Shriner's Hospital of Philly, that someone was representing the republic of Haiti and that we had Maryvale, which is a home for girls, and that we had the Children's Institute, Inc. plus the North Park kids. So they had listed all those people and extended a thank you to the directors of each place and everyone had a representative from their place in the audience [I

replied, “Oh, ok, yea of course.”] So yea, the director of Shriner’s hospital was there and we got to have,

Carrie: And then, so then they did their thing, they did their concert and the audience must have been just like, dying!

Ron: Oh yea, and I knew from the previous one that the judges didn’t understand that they were homeless kids. So this time I sent them a note that explained exactly what was going on. And so at the end of the concert, um Frank Battisti was just absolutely, completely moved by this. And he contacted me and he swore that he would spend the rest of his life promoting the cause of social justice in music education. And that’s how I met Gary Hill. Because Frank called Gary and said, “You gotta me this guy.” [I replied, “Oh *now* I understand.”] And so then the next thing Gary calls me, and great friendships out of that. But Frank was just, well all of the adjudicators, they were absolutely moved by it. And um, really, really overcome. That’s why two of them followed me onto the street.

Carrie: [I laughed heartily] Oh ok! So that’s where that story fits in!

Ron: We were on our way back to the hotel, when it was starting to rain! And they were still just walking with me to the corner waiting for the light to change! Meanwhile some other band is waiting for them to get back! And so yea, we called it the East Coast Music Club. And that included all of Baltimore/Philly, Maryvale, which is just a few miles from here. We don’t really have a program there now because they changed leadership there and they don’t really value us there anymore. It’s a place for girls in *extreme* crisis, for girls up to age 17. But, um, *extreme* crisis. It’s a lockdown facility.

Carrie: So even there? Even there you were sending your students there to teach those girls and parents weren’t scared?

Ron: No, no never.

Carrie: Do you think *you* helped somehow to make it so those parents weren’t scared?

Ron: Well they knew I’d always be present. Ya know, that I was there. And um, it wasn’t that the girls, ok lock down? They weren’t criminals, they were rape victims, they were abuse victims, they were um, basically victimized in some way, taken out of homes by the court, um, some of

them had been messed up on drugs and stuff and rehabilitated. Maryvale is run by an order of nuns and the lockdown would be when the girls would just lose it themselves and kind of go crazy. But that was a wonderful, wonderful time and it was always peaceful, very, very peaceful. We even played a concert there one time. But no, I've never had parents worry about that. I never have, never, haven't had any, any concern. I've had the *one* parent way back, just the one and that's it.

Me: OK, I think we are finally through the first two questions! OK, tell me about the three educational goals you have as you teach everyday.

Ron: Let me get something here [he hands me a piece of paper from his desk which lists his three teaching goals]. I had one of these on my refrigerator, to keep reminding me that um, uh, to be very, very careful to never, never make this about me. It's really important to me that it's not be about me.

1. To enhance the moral foundation of every student

Enhance is the important word, I used to think to lay a moral foundation. But then that would be taking away from the great job of parents, and so, so um, because we have a lot of great parents around here. So I see it as just, that's a goal of mine, to pass on something. Ya know, once the kids have been through my program, that they would have a better moral foundation. The difference of right and wrong, and know that through the trials of life, that they could rely on that, a foundation, of morality to always come back to.

2. This is something many people miss their entire lifetime: To awaken a sense of life purpose.

Very lucky is the person who finds life purpose because um, because I've never taken a survey but I would guess that there's more people that *don't* have a life purpose. I mean that's only an assumption. But I clearly see that kids who've moved on do feel they know that there is something special that they can do. People want to make a difference but they don't know how. I'm using music right now for them to make a difference right now at this time in their lives. But they have other interests and they will do other things, and I hope that they will use the practice that we have in making a difference and put that to use with whatever else their going to do, because their going to do other things. So that's why I teach them, "You go out and use your God-given gifts and talents for the good of others, for the good of others."

3. And then, to call every heart to a higher sense of unselfish love.

Because no one can say what level one is at, we can't say that anyone is at a high level or at a low level, how do we measure? But just to say, lets

keep working to get to a higher level than where we are at. A higher level of unselfish love, that is what's important.

Carrie: Well, those three things certainly aren't easy things to teach. And teachers aren't necessarily taught in college how to teach those things, so some people might respond to that by saying, "It's not the job of the schools to teach moral and humanistic values. We only have a certain amount of time and we have to teach these skills and that knowledge and we don't have time for that. That is the job for, somebody else."

Ron: I say, [he grabs the December *Instrumentalist* issue and reads from the end of the article as we both laugh] I believe that the future of music education in each community will depend not on which awards the program has collected but on the community's positive experience with the program. It is the inherent responsibility of every educator in the United States of America, from every discipline and every subject and at all levels, from elementary to college to stand up for and to instill the values and the integrity that will build a more firm foundation of peace, freedom, and justice in our communities and in our nation. [He slammed the magazine down on his desk.] That's what I say to that! [He laughed loudly] That whole article was *just* so I could say that! That's what I really wanted to tell them. So um, every teacher, what if every teacher, ya know what, check this out. Japan was destroyed in WWII, right? And they're a world power now. And they're leaders in technology. How did they get there? [I admitted, "I don't know."] OK, they decided that the only way to rebuild Japan was that *everyone* had to work together to rebuild their nation. And they did! They worked together, to rebuild Japan. By working together. President Obama, when he was elected in his inaugural speech, he said, "Americans, it's time that we all pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off, and begin the task of rebuilding America." and we haven't done it. The Prime Minister of England, a few years ago, I won't quote him exactly, but in London there was this absolute riot for a few days of young people just running crazy, and he came on, check it, look up his quote, I forget it exactly, but he said something like, "You're seeing the result of an absolute moral collapse in society." We have to work together to rebuild our communities and our nation. I can't talk about Japan spiritually, but Japan rebuilt their nation. And they did it by working together. And that's what America needs to do. And we don't have national, or who's in charge of education in the United States? We don't have anyone, there is no one! Does the U.S. have a mission statement in education? No!

Carrie: I replied, "Well we have national standards and stuff like that."

Ron: But we don't have a mission, and yea they are creating standards now, but *who* actually is? *Teachers*? I don't think so. I really think we are facing moral collapse, but if I say that I'll offend everyone.

Carrie: In a couple of instances, I've had the chance to see you do a one on one meeting with a student and a parent. And in the times I've seen you do that, I've really seen you do some of this, all of this humanistic teaching to the parent [He said, "Yes" and gave a little smirk.] Well, some people wouldn't have guts to do that, or wouldn't feel it's their place to do that. Are you consciously doing that, or is it just part of the conversation?

Ron: I think it's just how I am. [He said with another smirk.]

Carrie: And, would you be able to give any advice to young teachers that wish they could do that but just don't have the life experience or the confidence?

Ron: I don't think a really young teacher can give a whole lot of advice to the parent, because it has to come from a real place. I mean, you've got to have life experience to share. A lot of parents don't have really good parenting skills, but they want to. And I'm not afraid to get in someone's face, a parents face. I'm not afraid of that. It's not always pleasant but um, sometimes they need to hear it because there are a lot of abusive parents. And I'm not afraid to put them in their place about it.

Carrie: You mean and really call them out on it? Well yea that can't go over well sometimes, has anybody ever,?

Ron: I've never had a complaint.

Carrie: [I was shocked to hear him say this again and we were both laughing at the situation] How do you? And you've never had anybody be like, "Who are YOU to tell ME?!"

Ron: Um, well no, because I try to put everything in the nicest way I can, but um, I've never had a conflict with it, no.

Carrie: Well, even just when I was giving an interview to a mom on the bus the other night and I asked her to describe you in a few sentences and she right away said, well she brought this up. She said, "Ya know he takes every opportunity he gets to actually minister to the parents." And she said,

“And we need that, a lot of us are young parents.” And I asked her if that ever offends people. And she said, “Well I can see how sometimes that its hard to hear, ya know we’re parents we don’t want to hear that we’re not doing the right thing. But we need to hear that, and I’m so glad he does that.”

Ron: [He smiled and laughed.] Good, I’m glad I heard that feedback, that’s nice. Well yea, I take every opportunity that comes up. If something’s going wrong, I stop for it. [I laughed and said, “Right, yea, I’ve noticed] Whether it’s the music or whatever the word, if there’s a life lesson for someone, I’m going to stop and get it, *because the person is more important than the music*. I have some advice every time I have a parent in the room, it’s not always the most pleasant thing. But I tell them, “Hey times are different from when you grew up.” And I say, “You should never, never just drop your kids off at someone’s house without meeting the parents, walking to the door, and knowing who’s on the other side of the door.” And they don’t always like to hear that, but, but that’s the truth! Things are, there’s a lot of crazy people out there right now. And I remind them, you’re kids are not going to get through high school without being off of drugs and alcohol, it’s just, you aren’t going to have that. But you’ve got to develop a moral fabric that knows the difference between right and wrong, so that they can say no to those things. And we all have responsibility in that, parents and teachers, all of us. I’ve actually broken up parties that were going to happen where kids told me that they’re invited to a party and there aren’t going to be any adults there and there was going to be alcohol. And I’ve made phone calls and I’ve stopped the parties.

Carrie: Well, it’s crazy for me to hear that, at middle school. And ya know, I keep being so shocked by how mature these kids are and I know a lot of that is attributed to the responsibility you give them, but it’s also got to be being raised in this tougher environment, that isn’t so privileged, that it just causes a person to grow up faster. These kids have been forced to grow up a lot faster. So that’s one of the good things, maybe coming out of their bad, except that we don’t want them to grow up tooo fast!

Ron: Did you see how happy they were, to go to the park with the playground yesterday?

Carrie: I *know*, I know!

Ron: They just want to be kids. But there is so much pressure to be adults. And that’s why I mix playful things in there. That whole dinosaur thing, that



might seem really off the wall, but we've been leading up to that for a while. [He had a tube of plastic, toy dinosaurs, which he kept showing the students and saying that one day some kids might get one] Well earlier in the year we played *Jurassic Park*. They love *Les Mis* so much that I think I'm gonna, next week, since we're in really good shape, it'll take me three days, but I'm going to hand out librettos and read through it. And I have a recording of the entire show, and I think I'm going to teach what its really about. Because a lot of them are going to go see the movie and there are very valuable things in there. There is a lot of symbolism and you've got to have someone guide you through it to really get the truth of all the symbolism. There's probably about eight kids that *know* what it's about because the Broadway show came last summer and I took some kids. That was a cupcake team award.

Carrie: Yes I've *noticed* these little cupcake team awards. So you do acknowledge that that's extra responsibility like crazy?

Ron: Oh yea, yea. And because their work is so amazing! They really, and if I want it to continue I have to make an example of them. Later when the orphanage band is set up and I get my ninth girl and when its stable with a number of kids, then they'll all get a photograph of the orphanage so they can always have that ya know. Yea I'll make sure they know they're appreciated. And I have awards at the end of the year and there is always something extra for cupcake kids or for kids who went way overboard with social outreach, I always have something extra.

Carrie: Do you think, well obviously the whole vibe of your bands has changed since you started doing all of this outreach. But before you started doing all this outreach, would you have still taken your kids on a big trip? Like all the way to Hawaii or Florida?

Ron: Oh we did, yea. And it was still special, ya know, before this. It was still really meaningful.

Carrie: I would just worry that the discipline and the respect and the care wasn't so strong yet.

Ron: It wasn't as it is now. There was a lot of discipline and there was a lot of care. They knew that I loved them. There was just a different focus and we weren't really making a difference. But it was still a lot of good times, really good times. And early in my career I pushed them, at first I didn't push them to win, then I went through a phase where I *did*. And then I

backed off and I stopped doing that, we still won. And we did lots of good things; some kids just lived for it.

Carrie: Of course, it was still band.

Ron: We had a lot of fun times. And we did go on tour. And we went to Hawaii and we went to Northern California, and we went on a Mexican cruise. We had a lot of fun on that, and Carnegie Hall of course, oh and Canada. It was just that, our trips always included competitions and now they don't. The last time we competed on a tour was 2003.

Carrie: Geeze that was ten years ago now!

Ron: Yea, yea its been ten years since we competed. Oh and I wanted to win really bad.

Carrie: Did you?!

Ron: But we didn't. We were the only middle school so we won the middle school round, but I wanted to beat all of the high schools. It was a concert thing and I never told anyone I was disappointed. But secretly I wanted to win that concert thing, but we didn't. We didn't really care at the end; we were having a fun time in Hawaii. But I never got into a tour for a competition again. And I started just leading my own tours. And um, and you also save a lot of money! Ya know, I mean you have to buy all the tour things, ya know, what are people thinking? I do all my own arrangements. I book the hotels, I book the transportation, and I book all the events.

Carrie: And then you don't have to pay the fees to enter the competitions, which are expensive!

Ron: Yea! If you compete in San Fransisco in a concert competition, you're going to pay \$200 a kid and what you'll get is two nights in a hotel, you'll get admission to a park, you'll play a performance where you'll get an award. And you get a hot dog dinner at the awards ceremony. Um, value? Really? If you book it yourself, value is about 75-80 a kid, and you pay \$200 a kid. [I gasped and said, "That's an important tidbit!"] Yea.

Carrie: Do you think 10-12 years ago, because I'll never forget the first day I walked in here, how every kid kept coming up, and not even just saying hi and welcome, but *shaking my hand* and looking me in the eye.

Ron: Yea, yea they do that to every visitor here.

Carrie: Did they used to do that?

Ron: In days past? Yea, yea we had a lot of visitors and they would do that. There was still a lot of heart to it. But there were some mean kids and the competition was stressful. And um, but there was still a lot of joy. I beat up on myself over it and some former kids come up and almost slap me and say, don't do that it was great.

Carrie: I'm sure it was great, because band is great, still.

Ron: It's just that it's something *better*.

Carrie: Yes right, exactly. Band still is wonderful, and anybody that is ever in band, now matter what, it's still a huge part of their life.

Ron: Right, I pushed them hard for a real high level in music, and we had some stressful practices and I lost my temper a few times, ya know. But not that bad, I wasn't like a really brutal teacher. They still knew that I cared. It was just that the kids that were there before, ya know all grown up they still hang on it, they still love it. That girl you just met was there when we were still competing, and she loved it. When she looks back, ya know she wishes it had been like it is now, but um, ya know, the kids still had a good experience, because like you said, it's still band.

Carrie: Tell me about your trip to London that was back then.

Ron: Oh we had a great time when we went to London. We went to an afternoon tea and learned all the manners. The boys learned to pull a chair out for a lady, and push it in, and we practiced all that. You had to have your left hand on your lap, and ya know we got the manners down so good. And there was a dad, he didn't travel with us, he went on his own. And he didn't have the money for afternoon tea. He just stood there watching on the sidelines. And there was a baby grand piano and someone was playing soft music. And the kids were just having an amazing time. And there was his son, and his son was a big guy, like 6 feet tall. And so I walked over to the dad and he was crying! [I was amazed and said, "He was crying?"] Yea the dad was crying, and he goes, "I gotta thank you." And I go, "You don't have to thank me." And he said, "I never thought I'd see my son like this." Ya know, he was wearing a tie, all proper and if a girl

got up from the table all the men had to stand up and when she returned all the men had to stand up, pull the chair out. And I taught them that had to take the ladies coat. All this stuff! Ya know, all the most proper British manners. And they followed them perfect.

Carrie: Awww that is so fun and cute. That must have been so cute!

Ron: Do you know about our toys in London?

Carrie: This was our first experience with toys, toy instruments for the children's hospital in London. So we were at the children's hospital in London and we were playing Haydn's *Toy Symphony* and all the kids had little stuffed toys. And as we played it, one at a time a band student was allowed to just stand up and give their stuffed toy to one of the patients. And we had a lot of fun with that. Then there was one girl who brought a stuffed pig and then there was a little boy with cancer who also had a stuffed pig! And they looked at each other and saw that they each had a pig and they fell in love with each other. And there, Laura is holding the pig, and I'm conducting the *Toy Symphony* and I can see what's going on, and I said, "Go, go." And they ran, they just ran to each other. And then she gave the pig and then the boy had two pigs. Um, and then it turned really sad because ah, the kids got a tour of the children's hospital, they split them into different groups and Laura, they took her into the critical care unit and there was her little boy. And he had his two pigs. And the nurse told us that it was the worst news, that he only had about three months to live. So, it turned pretty sad that day. But it was so meaningful. And yea, I followed up and sure enough the little boy died.

Carrie: Of course he did, but that is real life! And in a caring, supervised, controlled way, your students are being exposed to real life.

Ron: Yea.

### **Ron on Competition**

Ron: I can get really philosophical about who's really winning in the end. If you ask Frank Heuser [Head of Music Education, UCLA] about what competition does, he'll tell you, "It creates mean people." And, the competition of chair tryouts breaks up friendships, chair challenges breaks up friendships. I knew something was wrong with that. I've always known. And I remember being treated unfairly in seventh grade. And, I haven't forgotten. And this is in the [*The Instrumentalist*] article I said,

“The memory lasts forever.” You remember. You remember the teacher that was unfair to you, you remember the teacher that really believed in you. When a director pulls you out of a competition, you remember the teacher that didn’t believe in you. Ya know, you never forget that. It’s just bitterness for our world. I’ve always known something was wrong, but it’s the way everyone does it! Everyone has first clarinet, second and whoever’s in third clarinets is in third clarinet the whole year! And maybe for their entire high school career! I mean they don’t *need* to play above the break! And of course they don’t work real hard and they don’t see any hope and, and they don’t know better and they’re content. And they’re still enjoying music, but in my opinion not having a very high esteem for what they’re doing. It was two years ago, no it was last year! This is the first year I’ve done this rotation. Yes, ya see, everything I’m doing is an evolution, and it’s going to continue to evolve. Five years from now it’s not gonna resemble what it is now. But it’ll be better, who knows, I don’t know how, but it evolves. So last year I held seventh grade clarinet chair tryouts and I announced one student. I said I’m not telling all the chairs yet but I’m going to tell that Melinda is first chair. And oh my God, what a cat fight! Ya know, they *cut* her off. She was part of a group of girls, most of her friends played clarinet, some played flute, some played sax, but it’s a real close group of girls. They *cut* her out of the group, and they were just nasty, vicious! You know these girls you know as being really sweet. Those eighth grade girls, very sweet loving girls, but when they discovered that what I said, that Melinda is first chair in seventh grade, it was just brutal! And I thought, “There has got to be a better way. I’m tired of this going on!” And I think everyone has to deal with it, band directors everywhere have to deal with this. So why aren’t we doing anything about it?! And so ya know, I went into my meditative practices and it took me a few weeks. I had to, I got to teach Melinda about being nice to people who are being mean to her. I guided her, I was there just ya know, everything but holding her hand through every day of school for a number of weeks while she had no friends! And there was one leader, one leader and she is still the leader of the girls here. She’ll um, I think she’s gonna deal with this issue for life. She just becomes fueled with jealousy and she will seethe over jealousy and she’ll brood over it, and she’ll act out and she’ll lash out against anyone. And she had it in her head from the first day she was ever in band that she was going to be first chair clarinet in this band. And she’s often in the top group of clarinets, but she’s not the best. And so she was directing the girls. But that’s what happens in groups. I’m sure you know! There will be a leader and if that girl decides she’s going to be mad at someone *all* the girls are mad at them. And some of them don’t even know why they’re mad, but they have to follow the leader. So um, ya

know, what came out of it, good always comes out of bad to those who are open to finding the great exchange [he said very slowly] so I came out of it with this rotational thing. And the one girl is still not happy about it. She knows she has to go along with it, but she's ready to brood over anything. She's always watching to see, and basically, she just doesn't forgive me. [He laughed] But ya know, I'll come back and I'll be kind to her. Her dream was to be first chair, but unfortunately, deep down she knows I'm right. So, I hope I'm not gonna have a whole lot of problems, because for a major event, we're going to have to find a way to get people where they belong, but I still won't go for chairs, it'll just be this team is going to be playing first and after this event they won't play first as much. So um, we gotta find a way to deal with that, and um, but competition, if you ask Frank Heuser, he'll say it creates *mean* people. And what are we doing? Are we missing the great, ya know, the wonderful healing benefits of music? And yet, everyone, every director would say, yea sharing music is beautiful and everything, but they get so sidetracked into these competitions

Carrie: Well yea and again, it is just what's done. I mean that's what happened when this all started in this country. They were immediately like, "Well, let's have a competition." And it just went from there. Bands formed in the public schools and they wanted to standardize them and then compare and see who had the best! And that's the thing too, there is something good at the root of it, at trying to be your best. But it's too bad we weren't, I don't know, more careful.

Ron: Well we're training people for capitalism! [We both laughed loudly.] And so ya know, and some of the statistics will tell you that a large percentage of the most successful people studied music. OK, that's a wonderful thing to look at. But, how many people um, are at the top of business because they've stepped on toes? And, how many band directors are stepping on toes? These judgments, the southern California one is a mess, in my opinion. I've been the vice president two times and I've seen the unspeakable things, and they *hate* me right now. I'm cut off from them because I'm speaking the truth. They despised my article about competition. I sent it to be in their newsletter and they rejected it because my article speaks about the tragedy of band directors pulling kids out of competition because they're not good enough. And they do not want to face that. So I'm revising it, and I'm going to see if *The Instrumentalist* has the guts to print it. I don't know if they will, but if anyone would they will. Because they've shown, they were brave with my other stuff here because it's a whole different direction than where they've gone. So they were brave, in

my opinion they were willing to put it out there. So we'll see if they're brave enough on that one. But I think we have to look at dirty laundry also. The judging association just despises me, and they really want me gone. And they've been in meetings pounding their fists on the table saying, "That Wakefield has to go!"

Carrie: Oh man, it's just such a joke, it's just laughable!

Ron: Well you can see why King Solomon wrote, ya know thousands of years ago "Vanity of vanities in all things are vanity." And then he just goes on in this very bleak dark like oh my gosh, its gloom and doom the whole way, but it starts like this, "*All* things are vanity." [He laughed] Not some, but *all*, all things are vanity. And so, what are we doing? We're supposed to build a better world, to work together for a better society. It's the human responsibility, to work together for a better world, with *all* people. So going back ya know the, I think that in competition bands, a band director, I know I did, has a circle of the most supportive kids. They just like, surround you. And there's a circle of them, and they're the leaders, and everyone follows them, and they wanna win more than anyone. And then you have, probably a higher percentage of kids who really just wanted to play music and have fun and they go along with it because that's the way that it is. And, and after the competition, who cares? Does anyone really remember? Do you [he chuckled], do you like, sit there sometimes and go, "Oh my God, when I was a sophomore we won this field competition, and oh it was the best thing in the world." Who cares? [He laughed again]. But I bet you can think of a time when you played a concert and it was just fun and the music was great. Here we are, where everyone comes out a winner. Everyone, everyone, everyone, even the audience. There are no losers in this.

### **Ron on Social Justice**

Carrie: So I've really been reading a ton of articles on just plain old social justice in education and boy it is a *wide* subject [He sighed and said, "Yea, it is."] People have taken such different interpretations of it and they focus on such different points that it's hard for me to narrow it down. But one good article I was reading this week started, well a lot of them talk about, that it's too hard to define what justice is, so you have to define it by *injustices*. [ohh] So one article is talking about that and then talks a little about different *situations* obviously create different meanings of what justice is. Ya know, justice in one culture might be something completely different in another culture, so they call it "situadedness" and it then goes

on to talk about how we're automatically put in these identification roles. You're the teacher and they're the students. That automatically creates an injustice in a lot of people's eyes because the teacher is presenting his knowledge to the students. But then it started talking about these different identifications and how that automatically creates these segregations. Anyways, I'm getting to a point. The point I want to get to with you, is how they talk about how these seemingly acts of justice are actually acts of charity. That these create charity cases. I wonder how you feel about that [hmm]. I don't see that word coming up too often in here [I gesture to his *Instrumentalist* article.] What do you feel about charity and is what you are doing charity?

Ron: Well, it could be termed that way. But um, when my mind was trying to um, I just went blank on justice because I have a really beautiful of the word justice, but I've lost it, its not in my brain right now. [He chuckled] I'll let you know when it comes back to me. [Later Ron remembered the quote being that of Saint Bonaventure, "Justice is restoring beauty to that which has become deformed."]

Carrie: Well this thing about charity made me feel like charity is bad. And of course I've never thought that charity is bad. But now, rethinking it in this identifier way, obviously the people giving the charity identify with a certain role that they are *better*, ya know they feel that they are at some sort of higher level so they can reach down and *help* those that are not at the same level as them.

Ron: Well, that would be pride. And um, so, I would hope that its not ever perceived as pride. And but, acts of love and I think ya know, religiously, the word charity can be intertwined with the word love. And um yea, you could say this is charity to go play at a homeless shelter, but I don't think so. I think it's an act of unselfish love. Which I think is the way it's being presented. To leave others better off than they were when we first met. I'm not presenting to *anyone* to go feel sorry for someone and help them because they are down and out.

Carrie: So how, it's such a *fine* distinction, how do you think you steer it in the one direction? You know what? The students at ASU are going out to do these social engagements. Somebody said in my meeting once the other week, "Oh I get it, so we're supposed to be doing charity things, we're supposed to be doing charity work." And I thought, "Ohhhhh, well we could sit here and have another half hour conversation!" Or I could just say, "Yea that's the idea." So I just said, "Yea that's the idea." But it's like



you just said, something about saying it that way, it would be as if the person giving the act of the charity isn't receiving anything. And that isn't the case here at *all*. Your kids are giving but are *certainly* receiving a lot too. And they're *aware* of what they're receiving.

Ron: Oh yea, uh huh. I've said many times that it's in giving that you receive. I wish I had the text, but I was talking to a ninth grade student from the high school band and I forget what we are talking about but, her final text was, "It's in giving that you receive."

Carrie: So another comment I'm seeing in a lot of these surveys is that the kids talk about going off to help others that are less fortunate than them. And just saying it that way, "people that are less fortunate" makes it seem like one has been fortunate enough and therefore might be able to offer something to someone who hasn't been fortunate. It's not like you are instead telling your students that they are better than these people so they must go help them reach their level.

Ron: Well I think people are going to see it in all different ways, because, well for one thing, to be really selfless, well no one can be perfectly selfless. The closest anyone could ever come would take a great amount of spiritual practice to become a selfless person. Anything drawn to oneself can break this selflessness. Even to *consider*, to look inside one's heart and say, "Oh I was really selfless there" is selfish because you're giving yourself a pat on the back. So um, there are certainly all different levels and that's why I've used the term "higher level of unselfish love" because we can't be perfect, we can not. And, for me to open a music program in an orphanage, I could do it perfectly secret and really struggle, or I could let people know that I'm doing it and get the support that I need. And in letting people know what I'm doing, that can be perceived in all kinds of ways. "Is he bragging that he's doing that?" Ok, to brag could challenge others. Others could actually suffer who would look inside themselves and think, "My God, I can't do something like that." It could bring suffering on others. But the only people that would really suffer would be people that are trying to achieve a high spiritual level, that would compare and say, "I can't stack up to that." But um, and I have, I have secret things that I do that um, well are still I could count on one hand the secret things that I do that I don't tell *anyone*. Things that I do and it's just between me and God. And then everything else, if I'm gonna talk about it, then it's kind of calculated. Who am I going to share this with and what is my reason? And, but the moment you share it, then other people are going to come from different places and

make their judgments about what it is and what is the purpose. So um, I think a level of unselfish love is a safer way to go.

Carrie: Yea, I'm going to take some time to write about that little distinction, because I think it's important and I can, maybe I'm wrong, but I can hear people saying, "Well I'm not going to turn my band into a bunch of charity givers." And it's *that* type of statement, I guess like I already said, that type of statement means you feel like you're kids wouldn't be *getting* anything. Ya know in this situation I feel not only that your kids are receiving because they're giving, ya know emotionally and spiritually and happiness-wise, *but* they're also getting this experience. And some of them are *understanding* this. I see it from these surveys. They're also getting this understanding, meeting people they wouldn't normally meet, an understanding of the injustices of the world, and seeing that they *can* make a little bit of a difference. They're getting all of those things.

Ron: And well, what is, what do you think is one of the hardest decisions that young people have to make in high school? One of the most hard or frustrating decisions? I mean life decisions? I mean when they are presented with a decision yea it's a challenge, but I mean life decisions.

Carrie: Struggling to find themselves?

Ron: Yea finding themselves and choosing what they're gonna do, and not really being worldly. What do I major in, what career path do I follow, what do I do? I mean that's a big struggle for many people. Some people just know already and they find it and they're on their path. But, I think that if people are instilled with a sense that their life has purpose, that there is meaningful purpose, then they can be directed to something more meaningful. And that's a big part of this is um, not *telling* kids your life has purpose but *instilling* it into them through practice. Yea, you made a difference in middle school! Whether someone would call it charity or unselfish love or whatever. Even an act of charity improves the community. And um so, I think most important in this world is that we're all working together to create a better world. And we can all be coming from different places. And acts of charity? Yea, um, there is no reason to belittle that, because those are important and necessary. Of course I'm trying to show people that there is a broader scope of our purpose, that this is more like a way of life, a way of life to reach out to improve the lives of others, moment by moment, day by day, [I chimed in, "and through a lifetime?" Then we both chuckled.] There you go. So be careful about getting to hung on the word charity.

- Carrie: Ahh, well I *know*, if all these *philosophers* wouldn't get so hung up on every word in every sentence.
- Ron: A lot of them are just that, philosophers. But when it comes to doing, that's a whole different thing. That's what Frank Heuser came across. The subject of social justice in education has always been here, ya know for a hundred years. But its permeated music recently, and it *is* a big subject on a lot of university campuses. But continually they are *saying*, but it's not being *done*. And that's where Frank had this revelation in England. He was out at an educational music conference in England and there they were talking on and on and saying, "But this is a utopia that we're talking about." And Frank had been silent, but finally he said, "No you guys are wrong. It's being done. Everything you guys are describing is being done in California." And he said by the time he finished describing what we're doing here, everyone was in tears. And the next summer I was there in England speaking to them. So he brought me back. I just had a USC student visit, and it was someone I've never met and he wanted to observe. And he said, "I'll definitely be back, this is what we're *talking* about at USC, but it's not done except here." And I said, "Well that's not entirely true, it's being done at other places. Maybe not on this level or this constantly, but its being done."
- Carrie: It will be interesting to see if these [*Instrumentalist*] articles get anybody else to say, "Oh actually I'm doing some stuff like this." To have people come out of the woodwork to say I'm doing stuff like this too.
- Ron: Yea, I think people are doing little things. I don't know if anyone has like jumped completely like I have. And that's why I see myself as having the responsibility of exploring all the different options and then getting the information out. Because ya know, if every band had one little thing that they did, then I think music education would be just hugely impacted. If everyone just did *one* thing. You've got your competition and I've said it, competition is here to stay we aren't going to stop it. But, there are some attitudes we could look at in competition. I mean, what if my cultural parade I did caught on. Across the *nation* we have cultural parades. Everyone can find a Veterans Parade! And the Veterans Outreach is truly fabulous, really it is. Unfortunately they cut that part out of the article. Well they talked about our Veterans Concerts, so that was good.
- Carrie: Well I have to say, I've found myself having a whole new appreciation for veterans after I spent that week here with you last time, *seriously*.

Ron: Oh my God, isn't that incredible?

Carrie: Seriously, we had a football game that weekend. I think I went home to Phoenix Thursday or Friday and we had a game Saturday. And it was to honor the veterans for that football game and so the whole marching band show was all the songs of the army and the navy and everything [Ron replied, "That's great."] And there were a whole bunch of veterans out on the field with us. And I just had this *overwhelming* appreciation for them. I've never felt that in my life. I mean honestly, and this makes me sound like a jerk, but I've never really taken the time to think about these veterans and what their life means and everything until spending that week here with you guys. And then I'm just standing out there on the football field being like, "Thank you guys, thank you so much." And I was crying, and I've never felt that way before! But I guess there is just a sample of this. It also seems like, from my perspective, that you immerse these kids in your projects, "Now we're doing veterans, and everything is about veterans." And next it could be Korea. It's like these mini-immersions.

Ron: Right yes that's right, that's what we do for these cultural parades.

Carrie: So now for tomorrow [Senior Day], what do they know about what we are going to do tomorrow?

Ron: Well, um, as far as the Alzheimer's, I haven't said a whole lot. I've just told them, "I don't know what we're getting into!" It might be something really wonderful or it might not work out [I replied, "I bet it *will* work out!"] Yea, I think so. It's going to be interesting no matter what. I don't know if they're gonna respond. I just don't know, because it's just the first time. And every time it's the first time, you just hope for the best, right? But like veterans, it's very much like veterans actually. It's a senior/assisted living home so we will play to some really lonely people. And one of the things that led to "Senior Day" was a little page by Mother Theresa that I read. And I read it on like a personal conflict with someone, someone really important to me, who had cut me out of their life. And all of a sudden I had this, "Woa, I cant believe this." Ya know someone was really nasty and really hurt my feelings. So I went to my prayer and meditation of course to deal with it, and I was surprised at how much I was struggling with this issue. And yet that whole issue was um, was meant by God to draw a new good out of me. Which I did discover, and out of that I turned to Mother Theresa and so "Senior Day" and the veterans project are a direct result of me getting my heart broken by

someone that I loved a lot. So anyways, there I am reading, and mother Theresa writes about, she said, “The very worst human suffering is abandonment and loneliness.” And I read this and I’d just been abandoned, and I let my heart take it really hard. So I said, “Well God, help me deal with this.” And I did several weeks of mediation practices to deal with this healthily and I thought, “OK, what good am I going to turn this into?” And then I started thinking about the senior/assisted living homes and I started thinking about the veterans. And from *that*, these ideas grew. And that’s the beauty of the fruitfulness. It’s what I call the great exchange with God. You give him your problems, your worries, everything you have, and ask him to transform it to good for the world. That’s the great exchange [I responded, “I like that idea.”] Oh it’s a fabulous idea, and that’s exactly what he did. The great exchange. God I’m going to give you my self, my ego, my will, I’m going to give you every thing and you take it and transform it to fruitfulness in this world. And so, one little guy who got his heart broken and all of a sudden we’ve got the Veterans Outreach, the projects, the parade, the senior centers. All of this stuff, the veterans and seniors have just come up in the last two years. It was two years ago that I went through this personal hardship.

### **The beginning of the Mexican Orphanage Music Club**

Ron: Sally was in first grade when they came to the United States. Her mom had never been married and had Sally when she was very young of course, and like many people from Mexico, came here looking for a better life for her kid. It was just the mom and Sally. They are extremely humble, extremely humble people. And they shared a little tiny room, *all* those years from first grade until eighth grade. The mom worked in a laundromat somewhere. Of course she paid everything in cash, couldn’t have a bank account, had a car with a fake drivers license, ya know I mean its um, but not insurance, and um if she ever would have got pulled over, yikes.

Carrie: So then something happened after eighth grade?

Ron: Yea. But Sally became my very hardest working, most dedicated kid ever still to this day. And it’s amazing that she’s still working with me. And she helped me very much in the middle of getting the six children to Carnegie hall. There were times when she took one of the homeless children into her home. She gave her a place to sleep, a shower, food. Amazing, just an amazing person. I’ll tell you an amazing story about her in a minute that just happened. But this is really funny. When she was in seventh grade she was slacking off on her math homework and her math

teacher complained. And her mom came and said, "Please help us." I said, "Sally I'm afraid if you won't do your math homework I'm going to have to tell you that you can't go to the homeless shelter." Can you imagine a conversation like that?! In middle school with a seventh grade girl? [He laughed heartily.] And she started to cry, and said, "I'll do anything, I'll do it!" [He laughed again] If you don't do your homework, you cant go to the homeless shelter. That's one of the funniest things.

Carrie: And that was the right at the beginning right? So it's not like there was already this thing held up that all these kids are currently striving towards.

Ron: Oh yea, now its so established that they strive towards it, which is amazing.

Carrie: But then, she just wanted to go because she had helped so much?

Ron: Yes and she is an extremely rare soul. She was um, earlier before the beginning of this school year, this just happened in August because she goes to private school. School was going to start and she had to go get the school clothes. So she took the bus up, she lives about 30 miles out of Cuernavaca, takes the bus up, goes to the mall, gets the clothes she needs, gets back on the bus, and she goes to sleep. She woke up and everyone was screaming, and there were two gunmen on the bus, and one was pointing a gun into the face of the driver while the other one came down and robbed everyone. He gets to Sally and puts the gun right in her face. And she said, "I didn't know what to do, so I smiled at him." She's got a gun like in her face, she smiles, and he like completely disarmed. He pulls the gun away, doesn't rob her, backs off the bus in *awe*, just in awe, like something's going on. She was praying for him. And he goes to his partner and he says, "Lets go." Now next thing, you'd expect her to panic, "Oh my God I just had a gun in my face." No, and the other people are panicking. She started to pray for everyone, including the gunmen. And the reason she was telling me this whole story is, she says, "Please pray for the gunmen." This is an amazing person, a really, really amazing person. It doesn't surprise me, I told that story to a priest and I saw him a few weeks later and he said, "I put that in my sermon for two weeks!" [He laughed heartily.] A smile absolutely disarms the guy. Its unbelievable, I don't know what I would do.

Carrie: I don't know either! Well, I feel like in a case like that, it's an immediate, deeper than a personal connection. It's this spirit to spirit [Ron agreed,

“Absolutely, absolutely.”] Her spirit communicating with his saying, “Come on, I love you.” And he doesn’t even realize that’s happening.

Ron: Yup, he’s absolutely confused. And the man is going to convert, he has no choice in it now. He’s going to convert. Because in my opinion, he’s come face to face, he’s been in the face of a saint. And he’s a victim of her saintliness and her prayers and he can’t survive as a gunman anymore. So umm, so when I started the whole orphanage thing, I didn’t ask her if she wanted to help because I didn’t want to put her in the position. She would never say no to me, never, no way because I fathered her ya know, really. And her own father has nothing to do with her. And he lives there, but he won’t have anything to do with her. So I just told her about it ya know, but I didn’t ask her to help. And I hoped she would offer and of course she jumped on it fast and said, “Can I help, can I help?” And I said, “Well Sally, I was hoping you would ask, but I ya know, um, if it would be too much, I wouldn’t want to be asking you ya know, to do this, because you might, I don’t want to interfere with other things in your life.” And she said, “No no no I wanna do it.”

Carrie: So you’ve got eight instruments for the kids? How many kids are in this orphanage?

Ron: There’s uh [he showed me a long list of names] this many and I’ve asked the, so I don’t have to make decisions, I’ve asked the director to select eight kids age 9-12 which is ideal for starting, and the ones that he feels would have the interest. And then we’ll get it started and the kids who gather around and start wanting to do it we’ll [I asked, “Sell more cupcakes?”] We’ll, yea, we’ll add them later, and ya know, I’ll be promising them as early as next week. Hey just be patient, we’ll get started and then we’ll get you. In fact, I’m going to take a handful of recorders because we’ve got some eight year olds there. Six is too young, seven too young, but eight, I think a kid has to be able to spell his name. [He chuckled and I laughed and replied, “to play the recorder.”] Well yea, because we’re teaching written music. I’m not going to teach by rote.

Carrie: How come, just out of curiosity?

Ron: Well yea I think rote is valuable. It gets kids um, it frees them up to play music. But I think that more takes place in the brain when you’re reading music, learning to read music. And so I think that more good is done. Rote may be a faster way to get someone just to play music but, ya know. Does it make sense?

Carrie: Yes, that completely makes sense.

Ron: Written music is exercising the muscle of the brain, and ya know it's making you think.

Carrie: And yea part of, I would think, especially for this kind of stuff, is giving these kids some structure or, ya know what I mean?

Ron: In an orphanage, rote isn't going to be structure. [I agreed, "Yea right."] They're going to be off to play whatever they want. And I, I do want it to be structured. So that's that. Because the music is never, with me, is never the end result of what I'm looking for.

Carrie: And yea, this is the point, for me, that I want to convince people of. And I hate to use that word, but it's true. That's what I want to convince people of, that there is such a bigger, higher goal than just the music. People keep telling me, "Nine out of ten band teachers are going to be saying, 'My job is to teach music why are you trying to tell me all this other stuff?'" [Ron replied, "Of course of course."] So my job with this paper is to convince those nine out of ten people that, there is *so* much more, and it's your *obligation* to the *world* to be doing at *least* a step beyond.

Ron: Exactly, exactly and I don't know how I came off in Arizona at the CBDNA Band Education Symposium. I don't know if I came off as being, "This is it and everyone needs to be like me." [I responded, "No, you did not".] These are some *ideas* you can pick and pull from and choose from. I hope that's what it sounded like I was saying.

Carrie: You definitely came across that way. And I'm going to need to work to coming across that way because I tend to be more like, "Everyone NEEDS TO DO THIS!"

Ron: Yea I mean, if everyone did this, the world would definitely take a step forward. And well, band competitions are here to stay and they're going to be here and oh my God, I mean I just decided, and oh my God they twisted my arm into judging some band competitions this year and oh it's such a snake pit. Oh, but I felt, "Well this money can be used for some good." [He said with a wink and a nod] And um, but what a snake pit it is. And nobody's moving forward. There is just one year after the other, "OK, what are you going to do for your show?" And ya know, once in a while someone comes up with something innovative.



Carrie: Well you know if I'm talking to nine out of ten teachers, I'd like to say to those ten teachers, "Well nine of you are going to be losers at this competition. So is that your goal? Because that's a fact."

Ron: And I think you're too optimistic because I would say more like 99 out of 100. [I laughed and agreed, "Right I know."] That's my feelings, but what's important? You get one teacher to embrace or create a social justice program or even include a mediocre amount, just some. Every time you do an outreach, a social or a cultural outreach you leave others better off. And the kids that perform the outreach become better people, so if you affect a teacher, you're actually affecting thousands of people through them [I excitedly responded, "I hope so, right!"] You see?! And that's the part. It's hard, because you don't really get to see all of the good, the outcome. I've gotten often, the interview from *The Instrumentalist*, I've received some emails from teachers across the nation. And those that would take the time are a small percentage of those that are touched by it. And I watched on Facebook, and I loved this part, I loved it, not out of pride, but I loved to see a little bit of an affect. But I looked through on Facebook, all the articles that have been posted on *The Instrumentalist* group and people click "Like." There was, the highest number of clicks that they had on an article was 23, but then our interview quickly went up to 78. I go, "Wow, that's good." But so it was the most liked article since *The Instrumentalist* has joined Facebook. And I thought, this did some good. I'll never see it, but this did some good.

Carrie: How did *The Instrumentalist* know to contact you?

Ron: Oh umm, this is another funny kind of a, um, what I would call providence. It came out of my embarrassment of the local organization, the judges association here. They wanted to give me an award. I didn't want to get an award, but they insisted! And then I talked to Frank Heuser at UCLA and I go, "I don't want the award." And he goes, "You really need to just be gracious with them." And I said, "OK um, I don't know, I've got to think about it!" Well then I found out Gary Hill was coming out, he was the keynote speaker at that thing. And I wasn't going to go to their conference at all, because it's all about competition, except Gary was the keynote! So I thought, "Well I've really, I've got to be there for Gary. I'm not gonna let him come and be a keynote and not show up. So then I called up Lisa, you've met Lisa, and I said Lisa, "They're going to give me an award!" And she said, "Oh no!" Because she knows how I hate awards! [He laughed loudly.] I said, "I'm gonna make a deal with you. I'll go up

and receive the award if you promise you'll be there with me and I'll hand it to you under the table and you get rid of it and I'll never see it again." So we're at this table, and you know I've got Frank there and Gary, Lisa and a few other people at this table at this lunch. And they call me up and they give me the award and sure enough, I hand it to her, I never saw it again. And I was really embarrassed, ya know there's *Gary* and they're giving *me* an award. And he knows I don't stand for that. And then at the end a director came up and he said, "I've written some articles for *The Instrumentalist* and your story touched me and I'd like to interview you." There ya go, it was all meant for that. And when I agreed that I'd accept the award, it was on the condition that they didn't mention my competition past but they could mention my outreach in hopes that it would inspire others. So it *did* work out, for the better and awards, there is a purpose, they can help others. Ya know, Mother Theresa took the Nobel Peace Award and she did it with great humility. And She took the money and she used it for the poor. [He laughed.] And at her banquet, she begged them not to waste money on a banquet, but on the banquet they insisted on having for her at the end, she picked up all of the pieces of bread left on all the tables and they said, "What are you doing?" And she goes, "I'm taking these back to my people." [He laughed loudly!] They're giving her \$100,000 and she's collecting the uneaten buns! [He continued laughing] That they're going to eat five days later! But they so, they appreciated her of course. So that's how *The Instrumentalist* thing came about.

Carrie: So they did the interview and then they said they wanted more?

Ron: Yea, they said we've never done, we've never focused on this subject and it's time. And so I have two more articles waiting to go and I have, one I'm going to send about competition. About directors who take their kids out of competition because they're not good enough. That really bugs me, so I'm waiting. I'll send that in after the December one is published. And ya know, I don't know if they'll have the guts to print it. I sent it to a local association for the newsletter; they ran scared on that.

### **The Origination of the North Park Band Motto:**

#### **"Leaving others better off than they were when we first met"**

Ron: The thing with people is that they want to be accepted, they want to be accepted in anything and so society changes for each individual based on where they're at and what group they're in. Ok, we could walk into another classroom where nobody knows us and we're outsiders, we're

completely unknown. I could travel to Mexico, and I'm an absolute stranger in Mexico, ok? But even me, I could walk into an orphanage in Mexico and I want to be accepted. I can't do my purpose if the kids don't accept me. The kids want to be accepted, they want to know that the group accepts them. It's basic human feelings that wherever you are, you want to be accepted. And our feeling of confidence can certainly be fed by experiences of being accepted and it can be destroyed by experiences of being rejected. And I think that these kids are growing just by leaps and bounds in their personal confidence. Sally is one of my pride and joys, and I know I continually talk about her. But this was a really unconfident kid and she was like a little clown and I'm just amazed at what a confident, refined young lady she is becoming. [I had to reply, "Well, and talk about a feeling of being unaccepted, by the whole country saying, 'Get out' and then deporting her and her mother back to Mexico." ] Right well yea, and she dropped out of school when she went back to Mexico. And that was one of my things with her, was to pick her up off the floor and get her back in school. And I know that wouldn't have happened if I didn't get involved in her life. She would be out of school, she'd be working in a little store with her mom, and probably get married, she'd probably have kids by now. So um, but the *refinement* is just amazing. There were these three girls. I always let kids to come back to march in the Disneyland parade with us. And um, although I let them, the boys are hard because we have to fit them in uniforms. But girls are really easy because I have all my old color guard uniforms. And the girls know this, and then they know that if they can find a color guard dress that will fit, that I'll let them march in Disneyland. But there were three girls that were seniors, and Disneyland was just on Saturday, we just did it on Saturday. So I was sitting with some parents at our chaperone/picnic official area right? And these three girls walked up and they came up with such poise and they said, "Mr. Wakefield, we don't want to let this day go without saying thank you for letting us be a part of the group again." And I said, "Oh it's just great to have you hear." And then this one girl says, "I'd also like to ask you if you'd write me a recommendation for USC." And of course I said, "Yes, of course get me the info as soon as possible, because I'm so busy." And she said, "Yes I'll get the information to you immediately." So anyways, the girls walked away and the parents, ya know by the way the girls presented themselves, the parents said, "Those are amazing girls. I mean really impressive girls." And so I said, "Oh yea I know, those are the girls that built the Children's Institute, Inc. (CII) program." Sally started it with me and those three girls built it. And there was one parent, the drum majors dad, and this student has been to CII only one time to teach. And when I said, they built CII, he goes, "Woaa!" And I said, "See that? That's

what I want that for your daughter.” And there was like this revelation in him, where he thought, “By God if my daughter could be like them.” He said, “I want her to stay in CII!” [Ron laughed loudly.] And so, I know there is good being done here. I know it, I *don't* always get to see it, I'm not privileged, and it's not even my right, and it's none of my business. My business is to plant seeds and water them. Ya know um, the apple trees business, it's none of his business where the apple ends up and who it feeds, ya see? But once in a while I'm given the amazing grace of being able to see someone like those three girls and to work with Sally is *my* honor because um, in my opinion I would never, I can't stack up to the human that she is. She is a saint. And I don't say that lightly, *she* is a saint. The gun story I told you, I mean ha, and did I tell you about the Isaiah house with Sally? [I replied, “I don't think so.”] Ok, she's a saint, she's just a saint. When she was in sixth grade, she just begged me to take her to the homeless shelter, to the Isaiah House, just to play with the children. So I talked to her mom and we got a few of her friends, and the only day I could take her, at the time I was serving holy communion in the hospital, the one we're going to go to later today, and I would have to make my rounds in the rooms and hold these communion services. And I said, “Yea but Sally, we have to stop by the hospital, I have to serve communion.” And she said, “That's fine, no problem.” And she followed me around, and at the end when it was time, I had enough still so I actually served her. And this is something profound between me and her, that we just had a discussion about. Because it was the beginning of this amazing relationship that we have. I'm like a father figure, but we've done a lot of work together. And it started with me serving her communion in a hospital of all places. Anyways, she helped me to develop the birthday program. And this one particular day, we were doing a birthday program and the lady who is one of the directors goes into this panic because the church group who was supposed to serve dinner that night wasn't there. It was dinnertime and no one was there, no one was in the kitchen, nothing. Now they have this walk in refrigerator and there was this man there, a friend of mine, and I said to him, “Get on your cell phone, locate a pizza joint, order 20 large pizzas, we'll put it on my credit card and we'll make sure we have dinner tonight.” So he's ya know, making some calls and he had just placed an order for pizza and I came back and I said, “Tony, cancel it.” And he said, “Why?” And I said, “Come here, look.” And I take him in the kitchen. Sally had gone into this big walk in refrigerator. And we walk in and she's saying, “Diane, I need you to boil water. Krissy, I need mayonnaise here. We've got to get this salad going. And she's pulling out food!” [I gasp and ask, “And how old was she?”] She was in sixth grade, um, maybe seventh. And so she puts on this dinner and they made potato

salad, they cooked hot dogs, they made a fresh green salad, they hand carried, they served the ladies in the back. It was women and children at the time. They served a complete meal for about 100 homeless people. And I walk into the kitchen then after we were done. And they're cleaning the kitchen and there's Sally and she says, "Girls, we've got to leave this kitchen cleaner than when we found it." And I um, I slide, I mean you could lose me at anytime, I'll slide into these moments of contemplation. And um, and I heard her say that, and I'd already been so moved by the evening, and I just stayed out of the way and I just let her. And I took a few pictures, and they are lost forever, and I don't know why. I don't know what had happened, anyways, [he sighed] I wish I had pictures so much of that evening, but its in my head. But she said, "Girls we've got to leave this kitchen cleaner than when we found it." Now I go off, and I'm just silent, and when I come back, I've got it. We should strive to leave others better off than they were when we first met. Moment by moment, day by day, and through a lifetime. And I gave such thanks to God for that evening. But this um, this is a truly, truly amazing person. She helped me with Tiffany. And when Tiffany was going to Carnegie Hall and we'd have some practices on Friday nights and everything, there were times when we needed the kids to stay over and I always trusted Tiffany with Sally because Tiffany was always the most special one. So of course it was to Sally that I said, "I'd like you take Tiffany home." So she sheltered Tiffany and showered and gave her food. After Sally dropped out of school, she sent me a handwritten letter. It's a thing of the past, it's a treasure. This was from Mexico, I just treasure this letter. In it she's telling me stuff, "Oh Mr. Wakefield I wish I could be helping people the way we used to. But I don't know what to do." And then she's telling me something about her mom, and then says, "Oh by the way, I visited an orphanage and we took toys, my friends and I took toys and we played with them." And then she writes some other stuff about how her aunt is and how her uncle is, and then she goes on, "Oh I've been having some homeless children stay with me at my house in the last few days. It makes me really happy." She goes on [he starts to laugh], and this ok, [he continues laughing] she starts the letter with I want to be helping others but I don't know what to do. And it continues to pour out so innocently, with true, true humility, because she doesn't understand she's humble. She doesn't even realize she's helping.

APPENDIX B

PARENT, FORMER STUDENT, FORMER PARENT INTERVIEWS

This appendix contains an interview with a current band parent, a former band parent who is still involved with the program, and a former student. All names, except for Ron Wakefield's, have been changed to protect privacy of those people mentioned throughout the interviews.

### **Parent Interview**

Carrie: Can you tell me how many children you've had in the band?

Parent: Three

Carrie: How many years have you been a band parent?

Parent: This is my second year

Carrie: So all three of your kids are in seventh grade?

Parent: Yes

Carrie: So right now you are chaperoning "Senior Day," have you chaperoned for any other events?

Parent: I chaperoned last year also for "Senior Day," and there was another event that I helped with, but I drove as opposed to coming on the bus.

Carrie: And when you drove, did you drive a few students?

Parent: Yes

Carrie: Can you tell me about your personal experience as you witnessed these concerts and interactions happen?

Parent: I was very surprised because they do everything themselves. They don't need anyone to tell them, "OK time to do this." They already knew how to run their program; they knew how to check in. So they are very adult-like, very mature. So I was very, very pleasantly surprised about that.

Carrie: And how about as you watch them meet with these people that are so different than them? How do you feel about that?

Parent: I was very moved. I'm, I can be very quiet, very to myself. So seeing the kids talk to especially the elderly. They are so willing, they are not afraid. They don't make faces, ya know, it was very, very nice to see them interact with them.

Carrie: From your own boys talking about this, do you know if they've gone through a progression from being more nervous about the visitation portion of the concerts, when this was new to them, to being less nervous now? Have you seen them change through this?

Parent: Yes, they didn't know how to start a conversation at the beginning. They didn't know what to speak about. But they say that now everything just flows naturally from them and from the adults as well.

Carrie: Have you noticed any changes in your children since they've been a part of this program?

Parent: Their self-esteem has gone up. Every time they learn a new song or able to hit higher notes, it's a sense of accomplishment for them. So their self-esteem, they have a purpose. Since they are so close in age and since there are four of them, it's almost like they are fighting for attention. So now they each play a different instrument, so it's very different. It has helped them each to develop their own identity.

Carrie: How do you feel as a parent, seeing your child exposed to homeless people, sick people, hurt people, abused people? Is there any part of you as a parent that is scared for your child to do that?

Parent: No, um its funny my husband has actually taken them downtown L.A. to see the homeless people just to help them to appreciate what we have, the little that we have, the lot that we have, whatever it is. So I think it's great for them because it allows them to see everything that there is. We've kind of always sheltered our kids, covered them, protected them. So for them to see everything else that there is out there I think is very, very important.

Carrie: Do you think that this band program plays a role in motivating your children to come to school everyday.

Parent: Yes, they look forward to coming to band practice all the time.

Carrie: Does being in band helps them as a student overall?



- Parent: Yes, they know they have to keep up their grades. It's a motivation for them.
- Carrie: And why do you think your children continue to be in band?
- Parent: Because they love it. They love it. It was their idea to join. Ever since they were little I always said to my husband that I wanted them to learn to play instruments, because I always wanted to and I didn't. And my husband was always really pushy on sports; he wanted them to play sports. So we did, they did a couple of different sports. But when Mr. Wakefield came to speak to them at elementary school, they came home and all three of them were pumped and excited and they wanted to join. So at first I freaked out because of the cost, but my husband said, "Well, we'll do what we have to." And we said, "You can start it, do it for a year, and if you don't like it you don't have to continue." But they chose to continue because they look forward to it.
- Carrie: Can I ask you more about the financial aspect and just the responsibility in general? There is a lot of money; there is a lot of time. I would feel as a teacher that I might be making some parents upset with all of the fees, all of the fundraising, and all of the activities.
- Parent: I *was* very scared at first because when I went to North Park my cousin was in band and I remember hearing my aunt say how expensive it was so my mom never let me join. So I was terrified. But when we went to the first parent meeting Mr. Wakefield explained, he broke down everything, how the money is going to go. He gave us estimations on how much it would be to rent the instruments, because we didn't buy, we're renting the instruments. And for it being three of them, it's not a lot. *But* it does add up *because* it's three of them. But if we just had one child, I don't think it would be a problem at all.
- Carrie: But obviously you still think it's worth it to spend the money.
- Parent: Yes absolutely, absolutely. I would do it over again.
- Carrie: And do you see any negative impacts this program has on your children? Are there problems with missing school, or homework, or just anything negative?

Parent: No, I mean sometimes they have a lot of homework and they still have to practice so we just have to kind of juggle it. We live in condos so they can't practice after a certain time. So we tell them, get your practice in first and then finish your homework. And they work it out. They know what they have to do; they know they have to prioritize. So they are ok.

Carrie: Can you describe Mr. Wakefield in a few sentences?

Parent: I think the thing that I admire the *most* about him is that, besides everything that he is doing with the kids, every time there is a parent meeting or a concert, he takes advantage of the opportunity to almost minister to the parents. Because I think he is obviously doing a lot of work with the children, but who's talking to the parents? We as parents, we need to become educated. And I mean he'll speak to us about them ditching a boyfriend or girlfriend. Just any opportunity he has, he will take advantage of that and I commend him for that because the parents need to hear that.

Carrie: Do you think that might be offensive to any parents?

Parent: I think some parents might because we, as parents, we don't want to hear what we're doing wrong. But we have to be open. I mean it's our kids. We have to be willing to hear what we can do. He gets to see a side of them that most of us parents don't, so we should be open-minded and listen to it.

Carrie: If you had to tell somebody that didn't know anything about the North Park Band, what would you say is the most important, or most transformational, or just the best thing about it?

Parent: I think the homework, the practice log where they have to do an act of kindness every week. Because they, well I want to say that they cheat? "Oh I picked up my brother's pencil, oh I lent him a book because he didn't have one." And I say, "No, go *bigger!* *Plan* on a good deed!" So they are constantly thinking about what good they can do. So it's changing them on the inside. They're learning music yes, but there is so much more behind it that, parents. I mean everybody knows that North Park is the best band, yea. But there is just so much more than that. There is so much more.

Carrie: Well is there anything else you'd like to say?

Parent: Well just to say again that it definitely boosts up their self-esteem and there is a lot of accomplishment in them. Now they see that they can set goals and that it is very possible to reach them. And actually, ya know the other thing I'd like to say is that, ya know with all the different people they've been exposed to, they have learned *compassion*. The kids their own age or younger that have been extremely sick, the homeless families. I think they [the band] adopted a homeless family last year; there was somebody who had recently lost their home, I think they were kidnap victims or something like that? And anyways my boys were just very, very moved by meeting these people and what they had experienced. So it helps them again to appreciate what they have, but also to have compassion for those that are limited, that have less.

Carrie: Yes, and with the way this program used to be run, they might not have learned that compassion, but they would have been playing their instruments at a higher level. Which one of those is more important to you as a parent?

Parent: What they are doing now. Because when you are in competition, it's all or nothing. You're going to win, you're going to win and that's great I don't have anything against winning. But someone else is going to lose. Someone else is going to hurt. And you can't help but feel bad. But sometimes you get into the competition so bad, you don't care who gets hurt, as long as you come up on top. So it's very, very different [now]. And I think since my husband and I have brought our boys up in the church so much, I feel like my kids feel different than the rest of the kids [in the school, outside of band]. They are a little bit more disciplined, they behave differently, and they speak differently. So being with the band, they feel like they belong. Like, "OK, we're not weird, we're not strange. There are other people that are more disciplined and better behaved and more structured."

### **Former Band Parent Interview**

Carrie: How many children have you had in the band?

Former Parent (FP): Two

Carrie: How many parents were you a band parent for?

FP: Six years

Carrie: What years were your kids in band, were they doing all of this social outreach?

FP: No, my kids were here in the early 90s.

Carrie: So what was your experience like as a band parent back then?

FP: Well back then we were mostly a competitive band. So we did a lot of competing in parades that were band reviews, concerts.

Carrie: And I would imagine that back then there was still a lot of fundraising and all of that. As a parent did you ever feel that too much was being asked of you?

FP: No, I kind of expected it. I mean everybody I've spoken to just says that's part of the program. That's the way football works, that's the way baseball works, that's the way boy scouts work.

Carrie: As a parent did you see benefits for doing all of that extra work? Was it worth it?

FP: I think it was worth it, absolutely. Because ya know, I feel that competing brings out the best in people, if it's led correctly, if it's not competing for the sake of winning all the time. So yea, I think the kids learned discipline, that's one thing. And they learn responsibility. Ya know, being a part of a band obviously you can only, you are a cog in the wheel, ya know you need to be there. The responsibility of always being there and always being your best because you are supporting everybody around you, I think that's important to learn.

Carrie: Can you describe Mr. Wakefield and tell me what your relationship is like with him?

FP: Well now we are very close friends. We spend as much time together as we can. I mean we both have our own lives. But on Wednesdays I drive down with him to the Children's Institute, Inc. (CII). I take the kids down there and over the years I've just, being part of the band, I've been around even though my kids aren't in band, I'm still around helping with the outreach.

Carrie: How come?

FP: Because I enjoy the outreach. Ya know I think most people, including myself, want an outlet to help. And I think sometimes people won't go out and find that outlet, but if the outlet is there and they can be part of something, they're more than happy to pour themselves into it. And that's why I think programs like this are important. Because I feel inside that people really want to help, they want to give. And they don't know where to give, so rather than going out and not doing it because they are scared, if somebody's already done it then it's much easier to give. Giving of yourself, I mean there is nothing better.

Carrie: So can you tell me about what goes on at the Children's Institute?

FP: Well we bring the kids down there and they teach. And they get the children that are there. And I'm not exactly 100% sure about all of the children, but I'm pretty sure these children are abused or have had abuse in their lives before. And this institute tries to get the parents and the children and try to bring them a little bit of normalcy. So a music program *there* is kind of neat. In fact, Saturday they went to Disneyland. They brought some of the children from CII to Disney with them. And when we have parades, and most of the parades are for teaching and learning, not competing, and these children are also involved in those parades. The children that are in those particular situations, I think this gives them a great opportunity to see things that they wouldn't normally see. One of the other programs we are involved with is the Isaiah House. And I was there when we were bringing children down there. I started just going down there to help even when I wasn't bringing children. But then to see them in Carnegie Hall, those children, it was, it was wonderful, it's hard to explain it!

Carrie: I'm sure it's hard to explain it, but can ya try, [I laughed loudly]?!

FP: [He laughed also] Well, I mean here are these children and you know they are homeless and you know that they come from the most dysfunctional families that could ever be. Every one of them has a father or somebody in prison, and somebody's a drug addict, somebody's ya know, and that's all they know. And here we have seven, eight, ten year olds that are trying to steal cars. And we brought them something that they had never had before. We showed them that we cared, unconditionally. We didn't care what they did or who they were or who their parents were. And we gave them everything that they needed to perform, which gave them a little bit of structure because they needed to practice and they needed to be part of this band thing. And then to have this prize at the end of going to Carnegie

Hall. And not one of them knew what Carnegie Hall was, but they do now! And it's quite an accomplishment in my opinion, to be on the stage of Carnegie Hall. And to see the effort, two years worth of effort and then to see them play there, it brought tears to *my* eyes. Seriously, it was very emotional. And you know the backgrounds of the kids, and they had done something that kids in their situation would have never done.

Carrie: Now do you think the North Park students are able to grasp, at all, the enormity of what you just explained?

FP: I think they are too young. But I think they will. Because these are the kinds of things you want to instill in your own children. And I think over time, as they mature, ya know these are the kinds of things that will come back to them. And I think that, it's a great way to pass the baton to the next generation.

Carrie: So you do think this will have an impact on them?

FP: I *do* believe it will have a *very* positive impact. And not on everybody of course, I mean obviously people are different and some people think it's a joke, and ya know when I was a kid I joked around a lot, but in the back of their mind they still know that what they did meant something to somebody. I mean how can you touch somebody here, and they thank you for what they've done? It may not mean anything right now. But as you get older, you can relate a little bit more, and you can think, these are people. These experiences allow the kids to see these are *people*; they aren't just these I don't know. Ya know it brings a face, and a story.

Carrie: Right and with the number of these performances that they do, it helps the kids to do this over and over again. But also, it allows the kids to see that there are really a lot of people in this situation. Ya know, if they've been to 10 nursing homes and 100 different people in every one and can see that there is a whole population out here. It allows them to realize that this in itself is a huge situation.

FP: Right, these people are human. Just because you don't see them, doesn't mean they don't have a plight of their own. And I really do believe that the stuff stays there, the seeds get planted. Some of them will take root and some of them will just die on the vine. But I believe, even in the bad kids, they will still know there is something back there and that thing will just nibble at them constantly, that they could have done something differently.

- Carrie: Well I don't even know what to ask you because you have so much experience with this.
- FP: It's so much fun. I mean it was fun when we did competition, but not as much fun as is now, as a parent. Because I love seeing the kids get involved with this. They don't realize it, but as they get older, had they not been involved with something like this? I'm not one of those people that believes that people are generally good. I'm not one of those people. I believe we all have problems, [he chuckled]. And you can look at children; children will do anything they can to get out of anything they can. Ya know, so I don't believe people are all good. But I believe that people have a need to help people. I just think that instinctively we want to help somebody. And these kids are given this opportunity right now and they don't even realize it. They have an outlet that people who don't do this stuff don't have. And I think it makes them better people.
- Carrie: Well in the field of music education, it is always important to go to competitions. The goal is always how hard of music can we play, how well can we play it, how many trophies can we win? It's really interesting for me to talk to you, one that was a parent when that was the goal in this program. But now to see this completely different thing and to hear you say that this way is more important.
- FP: Absolutely, absolutely, without a doubt. And I've seen the metamorphosis of this program from competition to more community based and it's fantastic.
- Carrie: Have you noticed a change in the general persona of each year's band as the program has evolved over the years?
- FP: The band used to have a lot more stress, because when you are competing you are trying to be perfect, you want to be perfect. But Mr. Wakefield would always make it fun. He would always tell them, work hard, it doesn't matter if we win, but work hard. But he never *really* pushed them like that. But I know on occasion he must have. I mean he had to, you have to, they never lost a competition in 15 years or something like. But as the band morphed, it was more, "OK we don't have to be perfect, we aren't competing but we want to sound nice, but..." And it took a lot of the stress off of Mr. Wakefield and it took a lot of stress off of the kids. Now the kids are just having a blast. They *want* to be involved. I mean every year with the kids it's the same thing, "I want to be involved. When can I

go to CII, when can I go to the hospital, can I go?" I mean they ask; they want to be involved. Before they wanted to be in band because it was cool, "Hey we won, we're so good." But now they want to be in band for other reasons. It's not for the fact of being cool; it's for the fact that they do all these things that are kind of neat.

Carrie: Well that's about all the questions I have, but is there anything else you'd like to say?

FP: I think music in *this* form is the most important thing because it makes it relevant. There's one thread through all of society and it is music. For every culture, back for millennia, music has been the common thread through all people. It has brought them joy. And now you're bringing music education to a different level. And I think unfortunately in California and in so many other places, competition bands have become completely irrelevant. And I think that community outreach through music is the only relevant thing that will keep music *in* school and keep it funded. I hate to say it that way, but I believe that that's the case. I really believe that this is something that is very important right now. I mean North Park can be proud to say that they were the first middle school to go to the Rose Parade and the first middle school to do this and that, and that's great, but then it's gone, it's fleeting. But when you are constantly reaching out into the community, people remember, North Park Middle School is the band that came to us and played for us when we were eating dinner. It's different; it's a whole different community. It's not just a musical community you are impressing now, it's the *community*, the community at large.

Carrie: What is your profession by the way?

FP: I'm in IT. I fix computers.

Carrie: So you aren't a music teacher, and I didn't probe you to say any of this? [I laughed.]

FP: No, no I know nothing about music. I grew up playing hockey and basketball, and all those things. Hey you know that brings up another thing. So my children wanted to be in band. Now, I grew up a jock and, I mean, I had two boys. Yea, I had two boys! They're gonna play baseball, they're gonna play football. And I just remember he came home from school one day and said, "I joined the band!" And I just looked at him and



went, “What?!” And he said, “I joined the band, we need to go get a clarinet!” I said, “ We need to get a what?!” I was in shock. But, we made the best of it. He went to band, he’d come home and he started practicing. Well then I had to make sure he was practicing properly, so I had to learn what he was learning. Because I didn’t know what he was doing, he was doing a lot of squeaking and making a lot of horrifying noises. I didn’t know! And over time, I got him to actually teach me what he was learning. And it made for a great relationship. Yea, because now he was the teacher. And he was teaching me, and I actually went out and got myself a student clarinet and we both played together. It was so much fun. I learned to read music just a little bit, just enough so that I could catch him when he did the wrong things. It actually brought us a lot closer than baseball or basketball or football would have done for us. Because they are out for just winning and if you aren’t winning you aren’t anything. And I’ve heard his coaches, because he used to play basketball too and the coaches say, “You are nothing, if you aren’t winning you are nothing.” I mean, wow, makes you feel good huh?

Carrie: Yea, I know. Well there are plenty of band directors that say that too.

FP: Oh I know I’ve seen it! I’ve seen a lot of that. It’s fascinating. But ya know, this program has had a positive effect on my family, and ya know, on me.

Carrie: Can you think of any negative impacts this program could have in anyway?

FP: Negative? [He burst out laughing.] Well no! No I can’t. And I couldn’t think of any for when they were just competing, except for the fact that it wasn’t really benefiting anyone. I mean, what’s a trophy? I know Mr. Wakefield used to take them and throw them away and said the trophies are the kids. And he doesn’t like to take any credit for anything. He’s very humble.

Carrie: Yea he sure is.

FP: And he’s gotten more humble over the years. When I first met him he wasn’t this humble!

Carrie: [I began laughing.] That’s what he tells me, that’s what he tells me!

FP: Ya know, this community isn't very musically adept. They like mariachi music, something like 95% of the community is Hispanic. And I remember when I went to the band parent meeting where Mr. Wakefield said, "We've been invited to perform at Carnegie Hall!" And I'm like, "Carnegie Hall?!" And see, I was born and raised in New York City so I'm like, "Carnegie Hall? Wow, WOW! Tchaikovsky, ya know, he opened Carnegie Hall; presidents speak on the stage! WOW!" And the guy next to me, he says, "Carnegie Hall? I'd rather go to Ensenada!" And I'm goin, "huh?" [He laughed.] They have no clue, a lot of the parents. They were not shown these things; they don't have that type of culture. And it was very difficult for them to understand, [he laughed again] how amazing of an opportunity that was. And ya know, their children know. See? The next generation. Their children know. He teaches them *Les Miserables*. I bet you not one of the parents ever read *Les Miserables*. Ya see, the Pico Rivera community is making other changes that you aren't seeing just because of the culture that he is giving the kids, which is more mainstream [high art] culture, which they can then pass on to their kids. Ya know, we played this great music, we played *Les Mis*, we've gotta go see *Les Miserables*. I mean, how many parents in Pico Rivera are going to go see *Les Miserables*? Really, not many. It's just a very working class, lower income community. And I still don't know why he decided to come here. I have to figure that one out. I mean he was playing with the L.A. Philharmonic, he had all these other jobs and things, and then he decided to come teach in Pico Rivera! [He chuckled] Anyways, I don't know, I think that's kind of interesting and funny.

Carrie: Well I'm glad to hear you say all of that stuff, because some people might believe that the *music* and the higher class type of culture innate to western art music is not being taught in this program. People might think that that kind of stuff is being sacrificed in order to do social outreach concerts. So I'm glad to hear you say that you think these kids are still getting that kind of experience.

FP: It's important! I think it is anyways. I think maintaining that tradition in our society is important too.

### **Former Student Interview**

Carrie: How many years were you in the North Park Middle School Band?

Former Student (FS): Four years

Carrie: And for how many of those years was the band involved in this social outreach mission?

FS: It started when I was in seventh grade I believe.

Carrie: OK. So the years before that, the band was still really competition heavy?

FS: Yea, we were in competition the whole time I was in band. But we started doing the social outreach on the side as well. So during the week we would go to the homeless shelter and we'd teach little kids how to play, well for me clarinet, because I played clarinet. But they would also teach other instruments.

Carrie: How old are you?

FS: I'm 20.

Carrie: And what are you doing with your life right now?

FS: I am in college as a sociology major.

Carrie: What year are you in college?

FS: I'm in my third year.

Carrie: That's great, good for you. So try to describe for me the impact that this band has had on your life, directly or indirectly.

FS: It impacted me a lot, because I'm going into the field of sociology now and I don't think I would have even thought of this if it weren't band because I loved it so much. Um, I don't know. I stopped doing this for a while, all through high school and it didn't feel right to not continue to do it. And so when I met with Mr. Wakefield I told him how much I missed it and how I can't live without it and he said, "Well you know what you're supposed to do when you grow up, because you know you should be doing what you love!" [She laughed softly] And I said, "I know you're right!" I don't know why it took me so long to figure it out. Because I kept debating, "What should I do for my major? I have no clue." And then when I talked to him it just seemed so clear that I felt kind of dumb, because I was just like, "How could I not see it?"

Carrie: [I chuckled] Well sometimes the most obvious things we just don't see! So what, well I know these are kind of big questions that might be hard to answer, but what was it about your experience when you were here, what did you love so much? What was it? Can you put your finger on anything?

FS: Um well, I'm really not sure. Because you know, when we started we didn't even start teaching. We just started with the birthdays. Like, at the end of every month we would choose whose, well our group of kids, of our four students, we would chose who we were going to pick for that birthday and we would go to Target together and pick out their gifts by their age. [Mr. Wakefield gave us a card that] would say how old they were turning. And we would be so excited. And then my group was the first one to make a cake for them. And we were so excited to make them a cake. But seeing like the kids' faces, and how happy they are and they don't want to let you go because you are leaving. And I don't know, it's beautiful. I didn't want to let the feeling go so I just wanted to keep going back and going back.

Carrie: That's really nice. Try to complete this sentence for me. If it weren't for the North Park Middle School Band Program and Mr. Wakefield, I might have never...

FS: Found the thing I love to do?

Carrie: That's a great answer, great! And what do you remember most about your time in the band?

FS: Going to the Isaiah House.

Carrie: Mr. Wakefield had just told me I should interview you, he said that you were one of the best people he's ever had and the most interested in all of this. So you've told me the big picture, in general about what a great feeling that you've gotten from all of this and that you wanted to keep being able to do that. But would you also say that this experience helped you develop specific skills that you've called upon later in life?

FS: I would say so because I'm really shy. But, going out and teaching kids it has to make you less shy. Because you can't be awkward with the little kids because they'll *feel* it from you. So it did help me, it helped me be more outgoing.

- Carrie: OK, so you told me a bit about the birthday situation and how great that was. Tell me more about the actual teaching of those kids, teaching them the clarinet, and the relationships you developed with them.
- FS: Well I taught Jason [she looked around the office to find his picture]. Is he in here? No he's out there. And but he was really cute because he was really shy. And he wasn't involved with it, he just happened to be watching outside one day when I was there. And I don't know why I was there because I wasn't teaching anybody that day, but I just always wanted to go! So I was there and he was like, kind of causing a ruckus on the side, like trying to get attention. And Mr. Wakefield called me over and asked if I wanted to play the recorder with him, because he didn't have an instrument for him. And I said, "I don't know how to play the recorder!" And he was like, "It's almost like the clarinet, you just have to, I'll show you a few notes." And I said, "OK." And so I started teaching with him and he didn't really listen to me at first and I kept having to tell him to calm down and stuff. But then eventually he was really good with me. He would hug me when he saw me and if I told him anything he would right away do it, like for the clarinet. And then I graduated so I didn't really get to see him go to Carnegie Hall. But he *did* and ya know, I *started* him so that feels *good*!
- Carrie: Right, I bet it does! Can you compare that feeling of being proud of your student or proud of someone else to being proud of yourself?
- FS: Well I'd say it's better when you are proud of someone else because you are proud of someone else, but at the same time you are proud of yourself, so it's both. It's both because you are proud of yourself because you helped that person and then you are still so proud of him because he actually did it. And you knew he could do it all along, you just had to help him along the way.
- Carrie: Tell me more about some of the experiences you had with the band, tell me a story about London.
- FS: Well when we went to London, it was fun. I want to go back. Well he would teach us about the different castles and stuff. Like he would teach us things inside and tell us a story about it. Um, we played at a children's hospital, yea. And um, we actually, me and my friends we had kind of snuck out to my friends room and we almost weren't going to play at the children's hospital because we got in trouble. And I started crying, and I told him I was so sorry! But we just went in there really fast it wasn't like

we were going to be in [the friend's room] all night. And he said ok because he *knew* I couldn't miss out on this. So I got to play, but not only that, there were only about 10 of us that were able to go upstairs and give, because all of us brought a stuffed animal with us to give to the kids, but only a few of us were able to go up. I don't know why they weren't able to come down, but they were the more sick kids so we were able to go up and give them stuffed animals. Um, not everyone actually went in the room, but all of us kind of went. And it was just nice. My one friend had the best experience because she was able to give her little pig to someone and it was so cute. Even just to watch, because ya know it means a lot to the kids. Because they are so sick and they might feel like they don't have anyone even though they do. So it's just nice.

Carrie: That's a great story. Do you have any others for me?

FS: Um, one time when we were at the Isaiah House, I think it was still for birthdays, and when we were leaving out the back gate and we turned around and they were all right there, like so many of them, and they were all waving bye. And I don't think I'll ever forget that because it was so beautiful. And Mr. Wakefield was just like, "Look at them, look at the impact you make on them." And it was, we didn't even know what to say because it was just so unreal. And then like, because it was just like a movie, they were *all* waving bye to us because they didn't want us to go or something. And when I taught there it was parents and the kids, but now its just ladies there so it's different now.

Carrie: So obviously you feel that what Mr. Wakefield is doing with this program is important because of the impact it had on you personally, but can you tell me any bigger picture things about why think this program is important?

FS: Well I think its important now because kids are growing up so fast, and not in a good way. And band, especially this, Mr. Wakefield teaches you the good things about life and how to make impacts in a good way. And that it doesn't even have to be in a big way, it can be in a little way too. And I think that's good for kids at this age because they're either going to go in a good direction or they're going to go in a bad direction. So at this time it's really critical to try to get them to go on a good path. And I think this helps because it's like, it's so fun but it's so good too.

Carrie: I agree wholeheartedly. And so you think it's having an impact on the students themselves, but do you think it's actually having an impact on the community too?

FS: Of course! [She laughed loudly with a look of astonishment on her face] Of course!

Carrie: I know, [I chuckled] I'm sorry to even ask, but can you explain why and how?

FS: Well because the kids are so happy every time we go. The kids that we're teaching now, I help out at the Children's Institute. I ask my little girl, "Do you practice, do you practice?" And she says, yea she practices she sits at home and she'll practice instead of playing, you know she wants to stay inside and play her clarinet so she'll be good the next time we come so we'll be proud of her. I see her every two weeks or so and every time I see her I tell her how much better she's gotten and she gets so happy and she has a huge smile on her face because I'm like, "Wow, you are so much better than the last time!" She's just at a different place, so I think that motivates her to do better.

Carrie: Well, me let give you one more devil's advocate type of question here. What about the feeling that, well there are about 10 billion people in this world, who really cares that you helped one little kid feel better?

FS: They care, they care. Because no one can do it for them so it could be another ya know, if I didn't reach that one kid he could be a drug addict or something. Ya know, it's just one less person that ends up dead because they overdosed, or *anything*! I mean, ONE person matters!

Carrie: Exactly, ha that's great. I think that's a perfect place to end!

APPENDIX C  
STUDENT SURVEY RESPONSES



The following appendix contains a selection of fifteen responses to the survey I devised and distributed to the students in the Honor and Advanced Bands. Not all students returned the survey. The surveys were anonymous however, a key to the age, grade, gender, and instrument of each student response can be found at the end of this appendix. Although I did not change the majority of the punctuation mistakes made by the students when filling out the surveys, I did correct most spelling errors to ease reading.

1. Why did you first join band?
  - A. I first joined because I wanted to go on all the trips but I just ended up falling in love with the program
  - B. I first joined band because it would be very fun to play one [instrument].
  - C. I first joined band because I love music and I wanted to learn how to play the clarinet
  - D. I first joined band because all of my friends that were in band would always talk about how fun it was to be in band. They would always talk about how it always made them feel amazing to know that they were in a band that actually made a difference on people's lives. I wanted to be a part of that. My friends inspired me to join band.
  - E. I first joined band because I saw and heard the things the band has done to help others. Most of the reason why I joined is because I can help others.
  - F. I first joined band because I heard that the band helps people and also takes cool trips.
  - G. I joined band to have a musical experience.
  - H. I first joined band when I was going into the sixth grade. I joined because it would be like a fun and exciting experience.
  - I. I first joined band because I thought it would be fun to be part of something and be able to play music, not just listen to it.
  - J. I joined band because I thought it was going to be a great experience.
  - K. I first joined the North Park Band the summer before sixth grade.
  - L. [No answer]
  - M. I joined band because I was really interested in learning how to play music, an instrument with band and also, doing outreach.
  - N. I joined band in sixth grade.

- O. I first joined band because I wanted to help and visit places it all seemed fun to me. I wanted to help people feel love.
2. How many years have you been in the North Park Middle School Band?
- A. I have been in band for three years
  - B. One year and a half
  - C. I have been in band for two years
  - D. I've been in the North Park Middle School band for a little more than two years
  - E. Two years
  - F. I have been in the North Park Middle School Band for three years now.
  - G. I have been in the band three years.
  - H. I have been in band for two years going on three.
  - I. I've been in band for two years.
  - J. I have been in the band for two years.
  - K. I have been in the North park Middle School band for almost two years.
  - L. I've been in the band for two years.
  - M. I have been in the North Park Middle School Band for three years now.
  - N. I've been in band for three years.
  - O. two years
3. What kinds of social outreach concerts have you participated in with the band?
- A. I have participated in going to the Isaiah House (Women's Shelter) for homeless women, Veterans Hospital, The Brail Institute, Shriner's Hospital, Fresno Children's Hospital, Senior Centers, and I also go to CII [Children's Institute, Inc.] to teach abused children how to play an instrument
  - B. We participated in a Veterans Hospital and a homeless shelter
  - C. I have participated in Senior Center, Isaiah House, and Veterans Nursing Home Concerts
  - D. I've participated in many kinds of social outreach concerts. I've performed in a children's hospital and a homeless shelter for women (Isaiah House) multiple times. I've also performed at two senior centers, a Veterans Home, and a Veterans Nursing Home. Along with that I've performed at Salazar High School's graduation twice and a Children's Hospital in Fresno. I've also been in the Veterans Parade and Korean Parade twice.
  - E. Isaiah house, Veterans nursing home, Senior center
  - F. I have participated in the Veterans Home, the Senior Center, the Isaiah House, and the Children's Hospital in Fresno.

- G. I have participated in Veteran homes the Isaiah house children's hospitals and senior centers.
  - H. I have participated in many social outreach concerts, such as Veterans, homeless shelters, children's hospitals, senior centers.
  - I. I've gone to Senior Day, Isaiah house, and the Veterans Nursing Home.
  - J. The kinds of social outreach concerts I have participated in are senior homes, Veterans Hospital, homeless house.
  - K. I have participated in two social outreach concerts in the North Park Band which was the Veterans Hospital and the Isaiah House.
  - L. I participated in a Veterans Hospital, senior homes, Isaiah house, children's hospital, Veterans Home.
  - M. The social outreach concerts that I have participated with the band were going to Isaiah House (a house for homeless ladies), a children's hospital, and a Veterans Nursing Home.
  - N. I've been in: Shriners Hospital, Isaiah House, Veterans Hospitals, Senior Centers, Braile Institute
  - O. I have participated in two social outreach concerts. The Isaiah House and Veterans Hospital.
4. What types of activities or projects did you do in preparation for each of these concerts? (Veterans Project, etc)
- A. We have done our Veterans Projects where we made posters for our veterans and we asked them questions and then we presented them with our veteran. We also did our Korean projects and we got to pick a topic like clothes or language and we presented them and then we went to a Korean restaurant where Mr. Wakefield had us eat with chopsticks so we could have more of an appreciation for the culture.
  - B. We did concerts sometimes on a Thursday or Friday and we did a Veterans Presentation Project.
  - C. I have done a Veterans Project.
  - D. In preparation for some of these concerts I did a Veterans project twice for the Veterans Parade and Veterans Concert. I also did a Korean project once and ate at a Korean restaurant in preparation for the Korean Parade.
  - E. The project I had done so far is the Veterans Project.
  - F. We did a project for the Korean's but that was when we went to the Korean Parade. And also the Veterans Project of course.
  - G. I did after school practices and I practice at home.
  - H. One activity we did was in preparation for our Veterans Project. We interviewed our Veteran, wrote a paper about him and put it on a poster. Then we were in a Veterans parade.
  - I. For the Veteran's concert, we did the Veterans project.

- J. The preparations we did in order for these concerts are practicing, working hard, and learning new songs.
  - K. I have only done one project. That was the Veterans project in preparation for the Veterans Hospital.
  - L. For almost all concerts we prepare instruments and stands in a truck.
  - M. The types of projects I have done to prepare for parades or concerts were a Veterans Project, a Korean project. The types of activities I have done for our projects were going to a Korean restaurant and having lunch with our veterans.
  - N. I have done a Korean project, a Veterans Project. I experienced going to eat Korean food. I ate lunch with my veteran at the Veterans presentation/lunch.
  - O. The Veterans house we did a project on a Veteran. For the Isaiah House after we wrote a full paper or more about our feelings on it and experience on it.
5. Do you like doing the social outreach concerts/Why?
- A. I love doing our outreaches. I always love to make other people happy and put a smile on their faces. I love leaving others better off than they were when we first met.
  - B. Yes, because I like seeing people's smiles when we come and play for them
  - C. Yes because I like to see people happy when we play music for them
  - D. Yes, I do like the social outreach concerts because every time I go home from a concert, I get a feeling that I don't get very often in my everyday life. It's just an amazing feeling that I cannot describe. I just feel like my heart is asking me, "Don't you feel proud that you just left multiple people better off than they were when you first met?"
  - E. I like doing the social outreach concerts because when I play music to an audience it fills me with happiness to see them enjoy what we performed for them. Also, to let them know we care.
  - F. I like to do social outreach concerts because it makes me feel happy just to see the people be awakened by our music and also by leaving them better off.
  - G. Yes I enjoy social outreach because the people touch my heart and making them happy is a beautiful feeling.
  - H. Yes, I like the social outreach concerts because when we finish our concerts, I feel like they are happier, and they will have one of the songs we played stuck in their head. It will give them something to think about besides worrying.

- I. I love doing the social outreach concerts because they make you feel good. You feel different when you know you're making someone's life better with music.
  - J. Yes, I like social outreach concerts because I like spreading the culture and love with all the people I meet.
  - K. I like doing all of these social outreach concerts because I get to meet other people and share my God-given gifts and talents with them and leaving them better off than when we first met.
  - L. Definitely because it makes other people feel hope and love.
  - M. I really love doing social outreach concerts because I get to meet wonderful and beautiful people and I also love performing music for them.
  - N. I like doing social outreach because it makes me realize what a difference I can make with my music and by being nice to others.
  - O. I love social outreach concerts because we get to see people left better off than when we first meet. I love to see them smile or sing when we play a song they know.
6. Describe the concert that was most meaningful to you and explain why.
- A. The most meaningful concert for me was at the summer performance at the Isaiah House. My friend Marlene and I were talking to this one lady Debra, and I said that she had beautiful hair and she is like thank you and she let her hair down and I asked if it was her natural hair and she said yes and then she said do you really like it because I think it is ugly and we both said no, its beautiful and we started playing with her hair and we started braiding it. Then we had to leave so we were walking and we looked and Jenny and I ran back to her and gave her hugs and we said goodnights and Debra's friend said that Debra has said that she wished we wouldn't leave and that she loved us.
  - B. I think the homeless shelter because they want someone to come for them and care for them. I was very happy to see them happy
  - C. The most meaningful concert to me was the Isaiah House because the ladies there were so nice and I made a new friend there
  - D. The concert that was most meaningful to me was one for Senior Day at the Lutheran Towers when I was in seventh grade. That concert was most meaningful to me because I met a lady there named Celia, she spoke Spanish so not many people talked to her after the concert. When I went up to her, I found out that she was about 60 years old and had been living at Lutheran Towers for about less than 20 years. She was very funny and I immediately warmed up to her. I spoke to her until it was time to leave. Before I left, she gave me a hug and a kiss on the cheek. Almost as if I was her granddaughter and we had known

each other since I was born. After that, I just didn't want to leave her and go through life not getting to know her better. I have know been visiting her for about once a month for almost a year.

- E. The concert that was most meaningful to me was the Isaiah house. It was most meaningful because when we met the ladies they were so happy that we had performed for them. We met so many ladies that we had heard their stories. It was a pleasure meeting them.
- F. This is a tough decision, but I have to say that the Isaiah House was the most meaningful to me because on some songs we would play they will sing. Also how we get to talk to them in the end. And whenever we would leave they would be sad. So I knew we had to come back.
- G. My most meaningful concert was when I went to the senior center the people there told me that I reminded them of their own grandchildren.
- H. The concert that was most meaningful to me was last year's Christmas concert at the Isaiah House. It was most meaningful to me because when we played *Silent Night* the ladies started singing to our music and it seemed like it gave them some sort of joy.
- I. The most meaningful concert for me was probably the Veterans nursing home concert because it was a wonderful experience playing for the men who fought for out country and meeting them.
- J. The concert that was most meaningful to me was the Veterans hospital because we got to go bed side with the veterans.
- K. The concert that was most meaningful to me was the Veterans Hospital because just thinking about what they've done for us, watching some of them crying while we're playing really touched me.
- L. All were meaningful but one example is the Isaiah House. The women there really loved our concert and us visiting.
- M. The concert that was most meaningful for me would have to be the Isaiah House because those ladies are wonderful, beautiful and its like you're so flabbergasted that you never met a person like them.
- N. At the Isaiah House for Homeless ladies, I met a lady that was really nice. She was so grateful that we came to visit. She told me I reminded her of her daughter. When it was time to leave, I gave her a kiss and said good-bye.
- O. The most meaningful concert to me is the Isaiah House because I love to see the joy I brought to the face and how I connected with them.

7. By being involved with this type of band program, do you feel you are learning things that you can relate to other parts of your life? Are there skills you are picking up here that you can use to solve problems in other parts of your life?
- A. Yes, Mr. Wakefield had told us of an old lady who was very poor that had given everything she had to a homeless lady and when I went to the mall I saw a homeless lady and her child. I went to the daughter and gave her my jacket because she was cold and I gave the mom everything, all my money I had.
  - B. Yes, we are learning to be kind and respectful to other people and helping out each other and not being selfish
  - C. Band has taught me life lessons and to always be nice and that has changed my life.
  - D. Yes, I do feel like I am learning things that I can relate to other parts of my life by being involved with this type of band. And yes, there are skills that I am picking up from the band that I can use to solve other problems in my life.
  - E. Yes, Mr. Wakefield's knowledge had helped me through parts of my life.
  - F. I am definitely learning life skills in the band. Mr. Wakefield teaches us those life lessons.
  - G. Yes it has made me less selfish and more thoughtful and grateful.
  - H. By being involved in the type of band program I do feel I am learning things that I can relate to other parts of my life and there are skills that I am picking up here. For example, I know that I am to use my gifts and talents for the good of others.
  - I. I feel I am learning things. Some of them include responsibility and not taking things for granted.
  - J. Yes, I feel I am learning stuff that can relate to me in other parts of my life and I can really use them in my problems.
  - K. The things we are learning are respect and put others first and I feel the things we are learning can help us on in life and by that we can solve our own problems.
  - L. Yes, at least once every two weeks.
  - M. By being involved with this band program I do feel like I can relate to other parts of my life because music always relaxes me and cheers me up when I have bad days. The skills that help me solve problems in other parts of my life is taking deep breaths with my lower back and reaching out to others and extending my hand to help others.
  - N. Yes, because it's helping me to become a better person.
  - O. Yes I do think I am learning things that I can relate to other parts of my life.

8. Have you noticed any changes in you or any of your friends since you became a member of this band and started participating in these kinds of projects?
- A. Well my mom says I have become a nice, giving, and polite young woman, and that I am no longer the little monster I was before ☺ I do feel more loving though.
  - B. Yes I have noticed a large change. Since the beginning we were loud and talking a lot before band, but right now we are being more quiet and being respectful.
  - C. Yes, we help each other through tough times. Like if a person is getting bullied we stop whatever we are doing and help that person
  - D. Yes, I have noticed changes in myself since I became a member of this band and started participating in these kinds of projects. I've noticed that I've been more forgiving since I joined band and a nicer person. I've also noticed that I am not as shy anymore and that I am more of a leader than I have ever been.
  - E. I have noticed many changes since my friends and I had joined band. Such as, respecting others more. Sometimes when something sad happens the emotion can have an effect on us as well.
  - F. No I have not and I hope they don't change but if they do then it has to be good.
  - G. Yes my friends have become more mature responsible and kind.
  - H. I have noticed changes in me because I have always wanted to do things for the homeless, veterans, and for children in the hospital. And now, I can do this and even more, I can put my thoughts into actions.
  - I. I've noticed that I've become more responsible and so have my friends. My friends and I have also become closer since we are all in band, almost like a family.
  - J. Yes, I have seen a lot of changes in me and my friends since joining the band.
  - K. Yes I've noticed a lot of changes like respecting others, more nicer, but since I've been in the band, it had changed the way I was before.
  - L. Yes in all my friends.
  - M. I have noticed changed in my band friends since I became a member of this amazing band and participating in projects. My friends and I love to help others, have fun, ad we get so emotional meeting others during our outreach concerts.
  - N. I noticed that I have been more responsible with my schoolwork. I also noticed that doing my acts of kindness has become a habit for me.
  - O. Yes I noticed that my friends are always happy and nice. I noticed that I am changing by me caring more and thinking more about other people than myself.



9. Try to describe Mr. Wakefield for me in just a few sentences.
- A. Mr. Wakefield is very kind and thoughtful. He is always thinking of everyone, trying to give everyone a special opportunity. I do and always have a lot of respect for him
  - B. Mr. Wakefield is a kind and generous person He is very unselfish and helps everyone in need and cares for everyone
  - C. Mr. Wakefield is caring and nice. He always tries to include social outreach kids in any event. I think he like the kind of grandpa everyone would want to have
  - D. Mr. Wakefield is just an amazing band director. I honestly believe that he is the best band director out there, no matter what anyone says. There is no other teacher like him. I can only describe him as a saint. He actually cares about what's going on in your life and actually helps you with it, unlike most teachers. He's just amazing.
  - E. Mr. Wakefield is an encouraging and fun man. He is like the band's best friend. He tells us life lessons that can help us in the future. Mr. Wakefield is a helpful man. Overall, Mr. Wakefield is the best band director.
  - F. Mr. Wakefield is someone who cares about all of us, who strives us to be better than you thought you could be, and teaches us life lessons.
  - G. Mr. Wakefield is a very wise, kind, generous, funny man.
  - H. Mr. Wakefield is a man who teaches us life lessons that will matter in life. He is more than a music teacher.
  - I. Mr. Wakefield is a very kind, wise, and funny man. He always knows what to do in any situation and is a great teacher.
  - J. Mr. Wakefield is the best teacher I ever had. He is hardworking and funny. He always thinks of us first before he can think of himself.
  - K. Mr. Wakefield is a caring person. If I needed something he will be there for me. I think it's nice how he's doing all of these outreach programs. Its nice how he puts us first before he needs to do things. Mr. Wakefield is generous, caring, respectful, awesome, great, trustful, and an amazing teacher. Mr. Wakefield is my roll model when I grow up I want to be like him.
  - L. He's a leader in teaching us life. He's taught us leadership, to be equal, and meaning to life.
  - M. Mr. Wakefield is a wonderful person and it's my honor to meet such a loving, caring, and a very hard working teacher. He works very hard and he never complains and always expects the best from us, because we all know what's best for us. He is always there to help people and is always giving back. ☺

- N. Mr. Wakefield is a good band teacher. He is so giving to others. He has taught me not to be selfish and to be respectful. He is an awesome band teacher.
  - O. Mr. Wakefield is a wiseful, trustful person. We know he cares about us and is fun with us. He is a great teacher for what he does for us and the places he takes us.
10. Do you think it is important that you are doing social outreach, and why?
- A. Yes I do because it starts with us, we can change the world if we teach others what we are doing
  - B. I think it is important to do social outreach because we would be learning generosity out of it and kindness. It is very fun and nice to do it for people who like it
  - C. Yes because we are leaving everyone better off than they were when we first met
  - D. Yes, I think it is important that I am doing social outreach because, along with the band, I have left so many people better off than they were when we first met and it's just something that I wouldn't trade for anything.
  - E. Yes, because if we reach out to others the world can be a better place.
  - F. Yes I think it's important because since no one else does it we only do it. But we hope social outreach spreads throughout every band in schools.
  - G. Yes the outreach is stress relief for my audience and me.
  - H. Yes I think it's important to do social outreach because there are people who are less fortunate than us and I think we should try and help to make their lives better or feel better about something.
  - I. I think it is important because I've learned different things about life and I'm also leaving others better off than they were when we first met.
  - J. I think it's important because we can really leave others better off than when we first met.
  - K. I think it is important to do these social outreach, its not just about making us feel good, it's about putting them first.
  - L. Yes so I know what the world is like so I could change.
  - M. I really believe that doing social outreach is very important because it helps me open up my heart to others and it also helps me approach other people by not being shy and just talk to others.
  - N. Yes because I love helping others. Expressing my love through my instrument for people makes them really happy and I'm happy knowing I made a difference in someone's life.

- O. I think it is important that we are doing social outreach because it teaches us more stuff than we imagine and seen things like making people smile and happy and feel love.
11. Do you think you are having a positive impact on your community, how so? (You might have already answered most of this question in question 10) Are there any negative impacts you can think of?
- A. No I don't think there are any negative impacts. If our community sees the great things we are doing, we can spread it.
  - B. We have a positive impact on our community because we are kind to everyone. I don't know about any negative impacts
  - C. The North Park Band is trying to bring peace to a very broken world.
  - D. Yes, I think I am having a positive impact on my community because more people are being inspired to join band and that means more acts of kindnesses being done every week on a daily basis. And no, there not any negative impacts that I can think of.
  - E. Yes, the community seems to be more kind and helpful to one another.
  - F. I can't think of any negative impacts but of positive ones yes because even the people are happy.
  - G. No there are not any negative impacts that I can think of.
  - H. I think I'm having a positive impact on my community because we go around our community and play for them sometimes. I don't think there is a negative impact.
  - I. I do think the band has a positive impact on the community. We leave others better off than they were when we first met them. I cannot think of any negative impacts we might have.
  - J. I think so because we are teaching other kids how to love and share some feelings with other people. There is no negative impacts I can think of.
  - K. Yes, I think I am by doing my act of kindness and am not just making them feel better, I'm leaving them better off than they were when we first met.
  - L. All positive for my community.
  - M. A negative impact that I can think of is that some people just take an advantage or sometimes not even try to put some effort in these types of concerts.
  - N. I can't think of any negative impacts actually. But yes I do think I am having a positive impact on my community.
  - O. Yes we are having a positive impact on our community by doing our acts of kindness. Each week we are changing in a little way but little can always grow bigger. No there are no negative impacts I can think of.

12. Do you think this type of school program has a positive or negative impact on the students that are in the program? How and why?
- A. Positive because a lot of people want to join band and they help the program by buying cupcakes and ice cream and water
  - B. The students have a positive impact because of what we do and because it is fun. We like playing music and playing music for other people too.
  - C. Positive because one person in band used to be really mean to me but now we're real close friends.
  - D. Yes I think that this type of school program has a positive impact on the students that are in the program by giving these students another way to look at life. To show them that their problems in life aren't as bad as other people's problems in life. I think this is good because it shows students in the band a glimpse of the REAL world and prepares them for it.
  - E. The school program has a great effect on us students because it helps us see what the world may become and how we can improve it by being kind to one another and "leaving others better off than when we first met" ♥
  - F. Yes because students are becoming better persons than before they joined band and I hope more kids join.
  - G. It has no negative impact on the students
  - H. I think this type of school program has a positive impact on students in the program because we learn to leave others better off than they were when we first met, use our gifts and talents for the good of others, and also learn life lessons.
  - I. I think it has a positive impact because we just don't learn how to play music, we learn to express ourselves and help others with it. The band also becomes like a family and that's a good thing.
  - J. I think it has a positive impact because it teaches us kids how to love other people other than ourselves, by going to outreach concerts.
  - K. I think it has a positive impact on the program by teaching and going to these places watching these people smile make me almost cry because of tears on their faces.
  - L. A positive one because they are maturing fast.
  - M. I think this school program has a positive impact on the students that are in the program because it helps them reach out to people in need by sharing music to open their untouched hearts of music.
  - N. I think outreach has a positive impact on students because it teaches us to leave others better off.
  - O. I think this type of school program has a positive impact on the students because it is teaching music and other things.

Key: Age, Grade, Gender, Instrument

- A. Age 13, 8<sup>th</sup>, Female, Trumpet
- B. Age 12, 7<sup>th</sup>, Male, Trumpet
- C. Age 12, 7<sup>th</sup>, Female, Clarinet
- D. Age 13, 8<sup>th</sup>, Female, Clarinet
- E. Age 12, 7<sup>th</sup>, Female, Clarinet
- F. Age 13, 8<sup>th</sup>, Male, Tuba
- G. Age 13, 8<sup>th</sup>, Male, Flute
- H. Age 13, 8<sup>th</sup>, Female, Clarinet
- I. Age 12, 7<sup>th</sup>, Female, Clarinet
- J. Age 12, 7<sup>th</sup>, Male, Trumpet
- K. Age 12, 7<sup>th</sup>, Female, Saxophone
- L. Age 13, 8<sup>th</sup>, Male, Trumpet
- M. Age 13, 8<sup>th</sup>, Female, Flute
- N. Age 13, 8<sup>th</sup>, Female, Clarinet
- O. Age 13, 7<sup>th</sup>, Female, Flute

APPENDIX D

STUDENT PRACTICE LOG ENTRIES

The following appendix contains written student responses to the social outreach concerts on “Senior Day.” These responses were written into their weekly practice chart “act of kindness.” On this day the Honor Band traveled to Orchard, an Alzheimer facility and to Emeritus, an assisted living center. Ron assigned the students to write a response about their experiences at the two facilities. I received the responses without student names; therefore the responses are completely anonymous. Any names included in the responses have been changed to protect privacy.

### **1. Female Student**

On Wednesday at Orchard, we met this really special lady and she reminded me of my grandma before she passed. Her name was Carmen and she told us that she was from Mexico and how they jumped the border. As she was telling us it was like she was piecing a puzzle together and it was because of us. She told me I looked like her granddaughter. Only Brooke and I understood what she said because she only spoke Spanish. I felt like we changed her life then and there. She told us, “Que Dios las Bendigas,” God bless you. She said that we were beautiful girls, not only outside, but on the inside. She said we had “Corazones de oro,” hearts of gold. Mrs. Carmen wished us a Merry Christmas. It felt very warming to my heart when I got a very long and loving hug and kiss from Carmen. We wished her “Feliz Navidad” and left.

At Emeritus I met this man who played violin in an orchestra in New Port Beach. He told us to keep practicing our instruments because when you go to tryouts for an orchestra, there are gonna be people who are very talented, but then again, so are you

kids. He said to take music very seriously and not to let guys get the way of our dreams. We had a one on one conversation and he said he wished that all my dreams come true and that he hopes that I do become professional. We hugged and wished him a Merry Christmas. Another man was very humorous and started to tell us about how when he was a kid his family would eat tamales and bunuelos and drink champurado on Christmas. He said that every time we would have tamales, we should think of him. I felt like I could relate because that's what my family eats on Christmas. He made jokes about Elliot's trombone being taller than him. When we checked, it was true and that made him laugh. We sang for him and then he wished us a "Feliz Navidad." He said that he wishes that all our dreams come true and that only the best comes our way. He said I was his "Mija" or daughter for a day.

The visit that touched me most was one very old man who really wanted us to play a private concert for him. We could really tell that it meant a lot to him, and when we told him we would play for him the expression on his face changed from sad to a happiness that I can't even describe. It was just a face that will remain in my head for the rest of my life. Once we started to play, I saw him take the paper with the words to *Silent Night* out of his pocket and hold it out like a chorus of carolers. He thanked us when we were finished and I saw tears fall down the side of his face. He said that we were blessed and that God will reward us for what we are doing. He was like a grandfather to me and I will remember the words that he told me for the rest of my life, "I have finally found my angel, you have helped me, and now God will help you."



This, by far, was the best outreach concert I have been a part of. I feel like I really made a difference because I saw tears in the eyes of the people who we talked to. Thank you Mr. Wakefield for giving me the opportunity to make a difference in people's lives, and you have showed me how to use my talents unselfishly for the good of others. When I grow up, I'm gonna try to become a music teacher to make the world a better place. Thank you Mr. Wakefield, you have helped me find my purpose.

## **2. Female Student**

At Emeritus there was this lady that told me and Maria that she wished that her kids were just like us. Then we went to this lady that asked us if we had boyfriends and we said no and then she said that she had boys and she would love if her boys had girlfriends just like us and she said that they're all grown up. After we went to this other lady and I really liked talking to her because she was saying that she enjoyed our concert very much and kept on telling us that when were we gonna come back so that we could talk to her. Then she kept on holding our hands and kissing them and she kept on telling us to hug her and kiss her on her cheek. And she kept on talking about God, that she tells him, "God I'm ready, what are you waiting for? Take me already." And then she said that he tells her, "No, not yet." And then she said that God was going to take her but she said, "No God, give me more time, I want to see them again and hear their concert one more time." Then she said that when we come back and we don't see her that she's gonna call us from up there telling us, "Hey, I'm up here." And she didn't want us to go and wishes that we were her grandchildren.

At Orchard, we went to this lady and she told us that we played wonderfully that always keep playing the flute. Then we went to this other lady and we told her our name and there was this lady that was called Maria, just like Maria and a nurse called Rosa just like me. They told us that we should come more often cause sometimes their family members don't visit them.

### **3. Male Student**

I both enjoyed Orchard and Emeritus especially when they were singing along I felt like I was already connecting with them. The seniors were so nice, kind and loving and glad we came. But I was glad to be there to make them happy. But I loved more singing and playing for them than talking because I can express my feelings more and what's in my heart to make everyone as happy as they can be. I will never forget "Senior Day" and hope to do it next year and keep on doing it so everyone can experience what I experienced.

### **4. Male Student**

My experience at the two homes made me change my outlook on life. A lady just loves the holiday seasons so we sang for her. I've never felt so much love in my life. I've also saw love in her eyes. Looks like love does go further.

### **5. Female Student**

There was this lady who spoke Russian and I was trying to talk to her and I asked her how she liked the concert and I guess she understood me but she couldn't speak English and I started to walk away and she managed to say, "Concert nice, you are angle,

yes?” I just stood there, I didn’t know what to say and she took my hand and she said, “You are angel, I know.” And she smiled at me.

### **6. Male Student**

My day at the senior centers was fun because I got to see what actually goes on in senior centers. There was one lady who wanted to die because her husband died a few years back and thinks she’s lonely but she’s not alone because she has us or the people at the home where she lives to be with her. There was another lady who was 101 years old and she still has all her teeth because her husband was a dentist and she was a nurse. That was my experience at the senior centers.

### **7. Male Student**

At Orchard, Joe, Tom, and Phil and I sang to a woman *Silent Night* and when we finished she was so happy and we gave her a big hug and a kiss. At Emeritus, I met a man that was playing his guitar. He said he started to play it at the age of 8 and stopped at 13. He started taking lessons again when he turned 50 and his teacher told him that he has a gift and he should share it with everyone so he kind of does what we do, he plays for people to make them happy.

### **8. Female Student**

The visit to Orchard and Emeritus was one of the greatest experiences of the band’s outreach program. As we were playing and the people were singing I felt as if the music was healing the spot of pain and sadness in their hearts. When we were able to visit in Orchard, Jean and I met a man who said that his daughter’s life in music began with a

simple karaoke system and he felt so happy when he saw that our part of music started with school and he said he gave much appreciating to our band director (which is why I was pointing to you) and that man wished us luck with our music life.

In the Emeritus performance we met a very sensitive man that would cry as he spoke to us. He said, “Never give up the part of music in your soul throughout your life.” He said that he played the trumpet since he was 13 years old and he said every time he plays his trumpet it still brings him back to his childhood memories, even now that he is 88 years old. He said that as we were speaking he also had a clarinet in his room. These two visits made me understand better what it is to leave others better off and to use our God-given gifts and talents for the good of others!

APPENDIX E

POST-CONCERT DISCUSSIONS

This appendix contains the post-concert discussions following the Veterans Outreach Concerts, the “Senior Day” Concerts, and the Isaiah House Concert. To protect privacy, I will refer to female students as FS and male students as MS. Names of residents who came up in conversation have been changed. I denote Ron’s interjections into student responses and student interjections into Ron’s responses with parenthesis.

### **Veterans Post-Concert Discussion**

Ron (R): And you can’t be going like this [crumpling paper], is that respectful when people are talking? (no, no) Then just take it out of your hands. Make sure your cell phones are turned off. Who’s going to start and tell me how it went?

MS: After we visited with the veterans they all looked really happy.  
[a few students walk in late, Ron waits for all to get quiet]

R: Is this going to be difficult now? We aren’t done sharing. [He waits for it to be quiet] The same group that I’ve already talked to is not ready yet. I hope that you are not going to continue it. So we are going to start all over again, but it looks like they *are* continuing it. Ok, ok so tell me, what did you like about today?

MS: I liked seeing all the smiles on their faces.

R: Ok, can you be more specific, what part made them smile a lot?

MS: When we visited them.

R: Ok, student x?

FS: When we played God Bless America, I saw veterans singing along.

FS: When we went up to the rooms to visit the veterans and we sang *America the Beautiful* to them.

MS: There was this one veteran named John and he was talking about his um, his mates or whatever (his what?) I don’t know, his little friends (Ok, [everybody laughed] Someone is speaking, they deserve your respect, yes

and what else) Well they were in the jungle and they had to hide from the bombs going over their heads and so they laid down on the ground and one of the bombs flew onto his chest and it blew up on his chest.

R: Wow, that's amazing. And he's still alive? Wow

MS: But he has two tumors.

R: That's an amazing story. We heard another story like that with one of our visitors, the guy that stepped on the grenade, didn't we? Ok, who else did we meet?

MS: There was this one guy named RYP, it was a nickname, R-Y-P, respect your parents. And he told us how he used to be a pro scuba diver, and yea, he was cool.

FS: There was this one veteran that was 101 years old [another student whispered 102] oh yea 102, [she laughed].

R: And remember we were in room 102 so that was perfect wasn't it? So tell me, what was his name?

FS: Bernard

R: Bernard, thank you. So somebody tell me more about Bernard, what did he have to say?

FS: We were playing *God Bless America* and then he was like, oh do you have to go already?

R: Right he didn't want you to go did he?

FS: When we were playing for him, he saluted us.

R: Oh I heard that about that, that was nice, how did you react to that?

FS: I thought it was really special.

R: Yea that's really nice. So they saluted, there was a man who was 102 years old and he saluted you. Did anyone else hear anything from him, what wars he fought in or anything? [nobody answers] Well he could have even fought in WWI. That's amazing, and he looked like he was really healthy.

FS: He looked like 89 or something!

R: Well I know he hardly looked 102, that just shows you guys you need to eat your broccoli huh? [Everybody laughed loudly and then became quiet again] OK, somebody else tell us a story.

FS: When we played the toy song this one lady, her name was Mili, she got a spoon and a fork and she started banging them together!

R: Yea that's right, and some students yesterday asked me, they said, "What about women veterans?" And those ladies that were in there, they were veterans. So you did get to play for women veterans. But I was told also that there are places where we could find a lot of women veterans, so I'm going to do my research on them because I think we could give them equal attention don't you? So anyways, tell me something more about her. Was she the one up in the wheelchair up in the front?

Students: No, no she was wearing all pink, and she had reddish hair [There was chatter amongst the students about who this woman was].

R: I saw a lady who had a dog with her

Students: Yea, that was her

R: Yea, you know me and dogs, I had to get away from her! [Everybody laughed] So did she stay for the concert?

Students: Yea

R: So tell me more, so you did the toy song (yes) and you took the toys out there, and how did the concert go?

Students: They had fun.

R: They had fun, good. So you asked them to sing *God Bless America* or did they just sing along?

Students: They were just singing it.

R: Good, so the toy song was good with the veterans. So we went to two places today, Advanced Band went to the Veterans Home and the Honor



Band went to the Veterans Nursing Home. They saw a little bit more intensity than the Advanced Band. The audience was basically everyone was in a wheelchair, or in a bed. And Advanced Band you had some in a wheelchair but not all. But anyways, last year we tried the toy song in the nursing home and they didn't really want to do it. But that's good to know that in the Veterans Assisted Living Home they like to do it. So what else from the Veterans Home from the Advanced Band?

FS: There was a man that said we reminded us of his grandchild.

R: Every outreach for seniors, there is always someone that says that isn't there? Hey you guys in the back, are you being respectful right now? [He pauses to wait for an answer] Can I have an answer? Others have important things to say and in this room, each person who's speaking deserves your respect. And not just in this room, but everywhere you go. You respect everyone and everything at all times through your life. All people, all things deserve respect. Everything that is part of creation must be respected. All life, all things. Ok? And that starts right here and now, ok? Once again, student x?

FS: So um, I told him, he told us that we reminded us of his grandchildren. And how we shared our love with our music.

FS: There was this lady named Sadie, she was 98...

R: Oh we should have her meet that other guy, huh? [lots of laughter and whistles], but ya know he'll probably say, no I don't like younger women, [The laughter grows louder], I don't date girls that are under 100! [Everyone, including Ron, is laughing uncontrollably] OK, OK, shhhh, [he is still chuckling], you're gonna be ok there, [all are still chuckling, but calming down].

R: Ok so what else from the Honor Band in the nursing home? [He pauses, but no response] Anything else? The honor band got a surprise, um, a *thing* that kind of brings us to a new level now. They were actually in a small hospital and the honor band was invited up to visit patients bedside up in their hospital rooms. That's what they are talking about singing in the rooms. So we will do that again. Would you guys like to return there (yes, yes) Would you like to return this year (yes louder). Well I formed a deal with, there's a lady there named Marcia (haha, ya) did you meet Marcia? (yea, she was so nice, murmer, murmer) So anyways, yea I'm wondering who's going to be interested in this new activity and I think I'm

just going to mention it and see who comes to speak to me about it in the next few days. But I think we're going to form some small musical groups, say with like four students, and we'll go back to play some individual concerts for these Veterans in their rooms that can't come down. It was really nice for you guys to go up and visit them, they would have liked to be at the concert, but they just can't get down there. And some of them that just didn't say anything at all, that's because they can't. They can't talk. And that's why Marcia wanted to have you guys play. And I don't know if you noticed, but when you were playing *America the Beautiful*, there was one man in a wheelchair who was struggling really hard with his mouth. He sat there silent and with no motion and during *America the Beautiful*, his mouth was moving and he was desperately trying to sing the words. It was a very fun thing to see, a very touching thing to see, that a visit with music could bring that out of him. So um, what else, anything else?

MS: When we played for the people in the beds, they seemed really happy.

R: So was it successful then? [He speaks to a group in the back of the room, "when we are all through I want to talk to you girls in the back there, I just want you to remember that."] So was it successful then? (yes) What was most important then?

MS: Working to build better hearts with music, to make them happy and filled with love.

R: Very good, well put well put [everybody claps].

R: There is absolutely nothing valuable without love. Nothing, nothing can be valuable without love. You can think that it is, and you can trick yourself into thinking that it is. And you can place value on things, and yet without the ingredient of love, you are just fooling yourself. Nothing can have value without love. And if you wanted to really find the value in something, it would be the level of love that is brought to anything, anyone and anything. So you guys would like to go back there? Our guest John here is a Veteran. [John was a friend of Ron's who had spent the day with us.] We should find out where he served, huh? Don't you want to know?

John: I served in Vietnam for almost 15 months.

R: Wow, [all clapping] the highest respect goes to Vietnam Veterans right? [Way more clapping and cheering, and then kids shouting "thank you,"

“thank you for serving our country,” “thank you for fighting for our freedom!”] What have you guys learned concerning Vietnam Veterans that’s really, really important? What’s one of the reasons that you bring a very high respect to a Vietnam Veteran?

MS: Because they didn’t get enough respect when they came back.

MS: A lot of them didn’t get psychological help when they returned.

R: Right, a lot of them didn’t get that. And if you’ve been to war and seen those things, you’d probably want some kind of help wouldn’t you? That kind of sucks doesn’t it? And that came not very long after a war in Europe and Japan, WWII. Where everyone came back from WWII and they were *heroes!* They were celebrated, there were *parades*, they came back from Korea and there were *parades* honoring them! And they came back from Vietnam and they were, sent home. They got a, they got a bus ticket, to their hometown. And they got off the bus and they walked home to their moms. And that’s the story of many, many Vietnam Veterans. And that’s why you find, um, your music and your projects of the Veterans provides a lot of healing to many of them. What did you do in Vietnam John, if that’s an ok question to ask?

John: I was in the infantry for the first 11 months and then I was a door gunner on a helicopter after that.

R: Wow, so, he’s seen some pretty intense things hasn’t he? And was that your experience when you got back?

John: That was very clearly my experience when I got back.

R: And one other thing, did you know what you were fighting for?

John: I think mainly to stay alive. [That] was the main thing people did. Once people got over there, people got very disheartened with the war and the games that were going on and the things that were happening. There was just that. It was like a bond with all the service men that all they wanted to was just to get home.

R: Because they didn’t know the, keyword, purpose. We talked a little bit on my bus about WWII and there was *purpose*. Everyone wanted to join, everyone wanted to go to WWII; everyone *wanted* to be a part of that because they were truly out to save the world. They were truly out to

fight back against Hitler's armies. There was a huge purpose to WWII. And the war with Japan; Japan attacked the United States of America. People were really proud to go to WWII, but with Vietnam, it was like, "What is it about?" I think none of us even know still what it was about. And so that was an amazing statement he just made, he was fighting to stay alive. And then to get back and not be appreciated? I just, I want you to understand how important this Veterans Project is and what an amazing thing you've been through. And you heard it right there, and I'm sure some of you heard the same things in your veterans interviews. OK. Well you guys, great today. Great. I wasn't there for all of either of your concerts, but what I heard was beautiful. I stayed for part of Advanced Band and was only there for part of Honor Band, but both bands did a beautiful job. I know that you spread a lot of love. Did any of you get a hug? (I got a kiss) A kiss? Woaah! [Everybody laughs] From the guy that was 102 years old? [Everybody laughs hysterically, but quickly quiet down again] Ok just a few more things, just a few little things here um. I want to see, what are you learning about something called our God-given gifts and talents? Your talents, all your talents. The ones you know about, and the many you don't even know about yet, because some are hidden and you haven't discovered them yet.

FS: We are learning to share them and not to hold them back.

R: OK so, what are you to do with them, share?

MS: To help people feel hopeful again.

FS: We use the to leave others better of than when we first met.

R: Ok, to leave others better off. That should be a way of life, every day, moment by moment, day by day (all students reply, "and through a lifetime") and through a lifetime. That we should all strive to leave others better off than they were when we first met. Moment by moment, day by day, and through a lifetime. And you'll do yourselves well to remember that, to always be able to finish that anytime I start it. And you'll do yourselves more well to be the ones that start it and teach others to finish it. You all have the paper that's due on Friday is your act of kindness log and you're to write about your personal experience of the Veterans Concert today and the visitation. At least use the lines provided, but you can go to the back too. (can we staple more pages?) Yes, those of that have a lot to say just write until you're finished, get all your feelings out, it helps you and if you turned in your permission slip I'm going to share

what you write with Miss Carrie. So be respectful, do a good job on this assignment. So you can all leave your instruments in here up in the lockers, because you aren't going to go home and practice tonight, except, lets see who should I pick on, except Lucy here, Lucy has to go home and practice for three hours tonight! [Everybody laughed loudly] No just kidding, just kidding. Anyways, leave your instruments and what about the parents out there that cooked you dinner, what are you going to say to them on your way out (Thank you!) That's right, that's right, see you all tomorrow.

### **“Senior Day” Post-Concert Discussion**

R: OK, how did it go?

All: gooooodd

R: First tell me about the first place, the Orchard. How did you feel about that? What can you share with me about The Orchard Performance?

MS: It was different than anything that we've done. It wasn't something I had done before.

R: How was it different? Do you guys feel it was different? (they all nod yes) Ok but *how* was it different, what was different about The Orchard?

FS: We talked to one lady and we said goodbye we walked away and when we went back she didn't recognize us. We did that like three times and she didn't recognize us.

R: How many of you had experiences like that, where they didn't recognize you or they didn't really know what was going on? (many students raise their hands) OK, but they were nice anyways, huh. So you talked to them and then they forgot you. So what else? And that's Alzheimer's disease, you forget, you lose your memory.

FS: There was this lady who started crying after we played *Silent Night*. And she said that our music was so beautiful and she said that her husband died a week ago and that she really misses him, but I feel like she was crying because we gave her hope.

R: Yea you did, good. I'll tell you what tears are. OK? And I'll be the only one that will ever tell you this ever. Tears mean that your soul was touched. And your body can almost not handle your soul being touched

that deeply and so the body releases tears. It's a release that the body has when the soul, the human soul, your spirit that drives your body, is touched. So yea, yea, you touched her soul very much. What would you say about where you were if I threw in the word healing, what would come up in your heads and how would that relate to what you guys did today? Can anyone see a connection between the word healing and your concert? No? Are you being shy?

- MS: There was this one lady when we went to go speak to her, she said that the music, she felt so happy because we played with her. So that like, she felt better.
- R: Good, ok, what about at Emeritus? It looked like you were enjoying yourselves there, like you didn't want me to take you back. A lot of little private concerts, it was beautiful. What happened there? What can you share from Emeritus?
- MS: There was a guy playing the guitar for us. And he said he was playing since he was 8 and when he turned 50 he started taking guitar lessons again because he had stopped taking lessons when he was like 13. And his teacher told him that he had a gift and that he should share his gift with everyone at Emeritus.
- R: Oh that's nice. And he plays for all of them now?
- FS: There was this lady that was eating when we came into the room and she looked so happy because she said someone finally got to um, got to visit her.
- R: Yea they loved it didn't they? How did you feel when the people at The Orchard started to sing with you? Could you hear it? And how did that make you feel?
- FS: Um, it made me feel really happy because they were actually singing. Like, I didn't expect a lot of people to sing there, but they were singing so, I was just really happy.
- R: So they did sing, and they liked it didn't they? Do you feel like um, well what do you think that you've accomplished today? Did you make any goals happen today?

MS: There was one lady that me and my friend talked to and she said that she's been waiting for us for a long time and she said that she's going to tell someone named William that she saw us and that he's going to ask her where and she's going to say, "in the church." She was telling us that like, she started telling us things and I connected it together that she was basically just telling us that we were like her angels.

R: Ohhh, that's very good. What a nice compliment, huh? You guys are like angels.

Carrie: Can I ask you guys a question? I wasn't sitting in the room where you were doing the visitation at Emeritus, I was sitting in a different room doing an interview. But all of a sudden I heard some of you singing, and I heard you playing instruments, so what happened? And how did that happen, and why did that happen? [no responses] You guys are being shy still! OK, who was singing? (Some students raised their hands) And so how did that happen, what made you start singing? What happened?

MS: They asked us to sing.

Carrie: They asked you to sing? So one of the people just said, "Will you sing for us?" And then you guys started singing, and then how did that lead to you playing your instruments again?

MS: Because before everybody started singing and we thought it would be better if we just started playing instruments, since everyone was already singing.

Carrie: And then I just want to say that the first time I was with you guys was a few months ago, for a lot of you, that was I think your first experience doing this visitation. And I remember during that experience, there were a bunch of you crowding around me and not wanting to go talk to the people, you were scared and I was literally pushing some of you out saying, "Go, just go, go talk." And that just seems to me to be very different than from who you were tonight, where you were started singing and playing. So how has that change happened, why are you so much more comfortable now?

MS: Because we do it a lot more so we are a little bit more used to it, we know better how to talk to the people.

MS: Because we know now that love goes further. (what do you mean by that?) We know how to express it more.

R: Yea, the key in this is that we do it a lot. This is part of why we do so many outreach concerts. If you do one, you get exposed to it and you will walk away from it and go, well that was interesting, and you might take it or leave it. But when you do this kind of thing frequently, repeatedly, then we really begin to develop loving hearts, unselfish, loving hearts. And as you have met people from the Isaiah House and the Veterans Home, you have discovered that they are not scary people. And on top of that, we have embraced culture. So you are going to find that when you are much older, as you look back, that you have encountered or met face to face many kinds of people that are different than you are. The color of their skin, where they come from, what their background is, their age, their health, all sorts of differences in every possible way. And you are being exposed to all these different people and you are finding out that they are humans and they deserve to be loved and respected just as you do. So you are getting a real big variety of exposure to different types of people and people are beautiful everywhere, everywhere. And this is why it is so important that you never ever stand for anyone ever making a joke about the color of someone's skin or of someone that is different, that you know much, much better than that, that all people deserve to be respected and loved. We all have the same creator, everyone does. And the one that creates loves everyone. Everyone, everyone, loves everyone. Absolutely everyone, even the person that you hate. The one that creates loves the person that you hate. And so all people are worthy of dignity and love and respect. All people, everyone. How's Christmas starting to shape up for you now? What does that mean? Do you feel like maybe uh, a shining light, like a star of hope is starting to form in the desert of your heart? Hmm, it's big to think about that huh? The shining light, the star of hope starting to form in the desert of your heart. Well Christmas is born in love, all love. And we should live that everyday shouldn't we? If we were living Christmas everyday its kind of like we could say this: Let's be wise enough to search through that desert to find where we can lay down our God-given gifts and talents, with all our love for the good of others, to bring hope where there is despair. Remember those words! It's going to come up in a piece of music you are going to play later this year. That we should strive to give hope where there is despair. It's going to come up in the "Concert for Peace." You are going to hear the St. Mary's Choir sing those words with you, we should give hope where there is despair. Love where there is hatred. You still have one more big one Friday. If we learn to live this way, then Christmas can be everyday can't it? Wouldn't that



be amazing if you could walk through life leaving others better off everywhere you go? Moment by moment, day by day, and what?

All: Through a lifetime

R: And through a lifetime. Then we make the world a better place don't we? And it's not just one person, look, there are 45 of you. What happens to the world if those 45 learn this lesson and go out into the world and spread that kind of love to 45 more? Then we have 45 times 45 don't we? It's the only way that the world can come to true peace and justice. So, peace and love, it has to begin right here, right now, in your hearts, right now. And that's the world that you create as you walk through life. A better world because you are part of it. Moment by moment, day by day, and through a lifetime. OK? You guys get some rest, you have to be healthy. We've got one more to do on Friday and next week we get to work on *The Sound of Music*! [All clap and cheer] Ok, I want everyone to go home peacefully and quickly. And make sure that you are thinking about this. Oh one last thing, once again, your act of kindness on your practice sheet needs to be today. OK? So everyone that was shy and didn't speak up, you speak on your homework sheet. Everyone's got to write on your homework sheet you feeling about today. OK? OK, have a good night and I'll see you tomorrow.

### **Isaiah House Post-Concert Discussion**

R: OK, how was it, what do you have to say about tonight?

MS: It was fun and enjoyable.

R: It was fun and enjoyable? OK good, so what do you guys have to say?

FS: It was really happy this time, compared to last time.

R: Why was it so happy?

Students: It was Christmasy, its almost Christmas.

R: What else do you have to say? [He pauses, no response] How is Christmas shaping up for you guys?

Students: GOOODDD! [Lots of laughter and chatter, then some shhhhhs]

R: So is Christmas just about what you get for Christmas?

Students: No.

R: What's it going to be about?

Students: What we give.

R: What did you say?

Students: [Louder] What we *give*.

R: So, what did you give?

FS: Happiness and joy to the ladies at the Isaiah House since we played for them.

R: And so what does all this mean then? [He pauses] Are you guys talking? What does all this mean? What about the future? I want to hear from more than just student x? Student y?

MS: Our selfishness will go away?

R: Ok, what else does it mean? What does it mean for the future for you guys?

FS: To me it means that we have the potential to bring more hope, happiness and joy to a lot of people.

R: What else? Are you guys going to be shy again? You guys didn't talk to me very much on Wednesday, are you doing that again? I don't want to go home and think that this didn't mean anything? What are we going to share tonight? What does all this mean? [He pauses, no responses] Nothing? Did we just go and do that and it's all over with now?

MS: We left others better off.

R: Yea, and then what? [He pauses, no responses] You don't know? So you just played a concert and you don't know what it's about?

MS: We are leaving others better off than when we first met.

R: Well, maybe.

MS: We are giving them hope.

MS: We are giving them love.

R: OK, did you guys get anything out of this tonight? A bag of Doritos and a hot dog? [Children laugh and there is a murmur of whispers] So that's it? You didn't get anything? [He pauses, no responses] No? So you guys are making me feel like you didn't get anything out of it tonight. Student y again, how come she's the only one?

FS: We are showing them that we do care about them and that we love them no matter what.

R: Ok, that's good. Student b?

MS: We aren't letting them be lonely?

R: OK, who else?

MS: We're showing how much we care about them through the power of music?

R: Well how much do you care about them?

MS: A lot.

FS: We are using our talents for the good of others.

R: Ok, how does all this relate to Christmas?

FS: It's about giving and not receiving.

R: Good, who else?

FS: We were just giving them hope and joy for Christmas and they are probably more lonely at Christmas so, we just did that.

R: Why did we do three concerts this week? Why not just one? ...Why three instead of one, what good did that do? What's in that for you, to do three concerts this week?

FS: We got to see the people we play for, we got to see them happy.

R: Yea, you got to see them happy. And what else?

MS: We're leaving more people better off?

R: Ok, what else?

FS: We made more people happy in the loneliest places during Christmas.

R: Ok good, are there any other reasons?

FS: We shared our God-given gifts and talents for the good of others?

R: Yes, what else?

FS: We made people happier than they were before?

R: Ok good, but why three, why not just one? Was it too much (no) What if we had three more, would it be too much? (no) Ok well, what was interesting tonight?

M: Some of the Isaiah ladies remembered us and were expecting us to come. They remembered us from last time.

R: Yea, ok.

MS: Some of the Isaiah ladies remembered us and we felt special about sharing the music we played with them today.

R: Ok, next?

FS: We showed them that we do care about them. And they said that they want us to come back again soon.

R: OK, good. So what did *you* get out of it today?

FS: The feeling that we left other people happy during Christmas time when they don't have a lot of people to go to.

- R: Do you like that feeling? (yes) And how does that feeling help you? What does *that* do? What does that feeling do for you, to know that you helped others?
- FS: It makes us less selfish and want to give more.
- R: So it makes you want to do it again?
- FS: Yea.
- R: Yea? So are you going to do it again? (yea) How? What's past North Park?
- MS: The community?
- R: How are you going to do it past North Park? Is it all going to stop? So how is this going to have anything to do with your future? What do you think about that? Is all the sharing going to stop because you graduate from North Park?
- All: No
- R: So then what? How is this going to affect your future?
- Former Student: Somebody could major in sociology like me?
- R: Like you, uh huh! She went through this years ago, and here she is with us. Because she found out that it was a way of life, to walk through everyday of life leaving others better off. And she continues to strive for that, everyday. So I'm just asking then, does it end because you graduate from North Park? I hope not. So we do it a lot of times. When you do things a lot of times, they start to become habits. If you do things *one* time, it's just kind of like a little bit of entertainment and you kind of take notice of something. How is it that you get better on your instrument, what do you have to do to get better at playing your instruments?
- All: Practice
- R: Right, you've got to practice. And so, when you practice being nice to o others, what's that going to do to you? How does that affect you?
- FS: It'll make you a better person?

R: Uh huh, and a lot nicer person won't it? It will make you a lot nicer person. Why do you think I walked you through the house tonight at the end. What did you see? Did you look? What did you see?

FS: The ladies getting ready to go to bed on the floor.

R: Did you guys hear her? Ok yea, you saw some ladies getting ready to go to bed on the floor. Did you see some ladies getting ready to go to bed outside? [a cell phone rings] Just turn it off, its ok [a few students laugh]. So what about all the things you have? Do you think those ladies were feeling bad about going to sleep on the floor tonight? Did it look like they were feeling sorry for themselves?

All: No

R: I wonder why that was, huh? And in a little while you guys are all going to go crawl into your warm soft beds. I think when that happens, maybe it would be a good idea to be very grateful for your own soft, little bed. And what about the parents that provide for you? Have you been really respectful to your parents? Have you respected them in every way? Or do you need some work in some areas? Are you following all of the rules of your parents and respecting what they request of you? Only you can answer that then. But one thing, soon you are all going to go home and you are going to crawl into your own soft, warm, little bed. It's important that you take the time to let your parents know how you feel about them. And it's really important that you take the time to think about what kind of respect you're giving to them and to your family. To be truly grateful for all that you have. Well it's a good thing the world has you guys in it; because you make a difference in the world. And this year, 2012 is going to come to an end in one more week. You are going to go on Christmas break. You left a lot of veterans better off, you left a lot of homeless ladies better off, last week you were at Disneyland and your CII kids, some abused children got to march with you and go to Disneyland. A homeless girl got to go to Disneyland with you. There's eight really happy kids, far from here in Mexico, because of you. And there's gonna be another one. By Christmas time, there are going to be nine kids in Mexico that have band instruments. Guess what, they don't even have band in schools in Mexico. But there are nine happy kids. Can anyone think about what all that comes to? If I'm telling you that you made a difference? What about your future? What would you want from your future? What would you want to happen throughout your own lifetime? What would you like to know about your life when it's over? Anything?

FS: That I spent it helping others and making them better.

R: Good for you. I want to remind you of something. When your life is over, you're not going to take your car and your home and your money and your stuff with you. You're not going to take any of that with you. You're only going to take one thing with you. The day is going to come, and I hope it's a *long* time from now, but the day is going to come when you take your final breath. And there is only going to be one thing that you take with you when that happens. You are going to take your love with you; that's all. And in those final thoughts that you have, I don't think you're going to think about how cool the car was that you had. My great clarinet teacher, I know what his final words were. And I loved his final words, his name was Mitchell Lury. And he passed away. But his final words, he said, "I sang my song and I sang it well." And he spent a lifetime spreading love through music all over the world. Those were his final words, "I sang my song, and I sang it well." So we should all be fortunate as to be able to look at ourselves then, and be able to say things like that. Well, you've sung your song very well during this first part of the school year. And yes, I hope Christmas is nice for you and that you enjoy yourselves. But I hope that you spend some time thinking about the purpose of your life; because here in middle school, you've had a very high purpose. And what is supposed to happen is that you are to build on that, to *build* on it. If anyone should build a house on sand, then when a storm comes it will blow over. But if anyone builds a house on a firm foundation, when a storm comes it will stand up. And so you'll do well to build your life on a firm foundation, a firm foundation of goodness, kindness, doing good for others. Even those who hurt you, to do good for those who hurt you, to be kind back to them. Build a firm foundation for the rest of your life of goodness, kindness, justice, seeking peace and the goodness of everyone around you, to spread goodness. Then you can become wise, if you are seeking those things. If you're not seeking those things, you'll never be wise. OK, so, Christmas you might hear stories about some wise people all in a bright light. It's one of my favorite parts. And when they arrive, they lay down their gifts and little do they know that there is going to be a great exchange over those gifts. And many people will be better off, through all of that light. I think next week I'll take time and teach you a little bit about *Les Miserables*. I have a word that I'm going to use and I want you to memorize the meaning when I give it to you, grace. *Les Miserables* is not about a man who goes on a journey, it's about grace. And I'll give you the definition right now and then you need to remember it and you need to seek the meaning of the word grace. Grace, an

undeserved gift meant to change a person's life for the better. Grace, an undeserved gift meant to change a person's life for the better. In *Les Miserables* it comes in the form of two candlesticks, but it comes up many times. Grace, an undeserved gift, undeserved, *undeserved* gift. That means when someone is mean to you, they don't *deserve* for you to be kind back. But your kindness begins the healing that that mean person needs. You see in them that they are human and that they messed up. And because they messed up, they need to heal. Not for you to take revenge, but they need healing. So when someone is not kind, you extend grace, an undeserved gift meant to change their life for the better. And then you participate in healing someone that was not nice to you. How lovely, isn't that lovely to think of? So you find out that they were beautiful all the time. They just made a mistake, that's all. That's all. So let's all make a promise that we're going to continue to work for a better community, a better world, beyond North Park. You graduate and you go your own way, which is a special way if you learned all the lessons. And you go out into the world and you strive to leave others better off than they were when they first met *you*. And you do that by using all your God-given gifts and talents, the way they were *intended to be used*, for the good of others. And you'll use them for the good of others moment by moment, day by day, and through a lifetime. Then I think you'll all deserve to be able to say, "I sang my song, and I sang it well." So let's get this place cleaned up and get out of her.







