

**Sheila E.’s Elevate Oakland and The Guitar Center Music Foundation Surprise Oakland Middle School Students with New Music Room and Instruments**

*The music instrument donation will help Elmhurst United Middle School realize its dream of building a robust music program.*

**Oakland, Calif.** (February 17, 2022) - The [Guitar Center Music Foundation](http://guitarcenterfoundation.org/) has partnered with [Elevate Oakland](https://www.elevateoakland.org/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) to build a brand-new music program at Elmhurst United Middle School, Oakland, Calif. This partnership comes at a critical time for music education programs across California.

Research shows that children who study a musical instrument are more likely to excel in all other studies, have enhanced critical thinking skills, and pursue higher education. Despite this, California music programs have consistently been subject to budget cuts in the last decade.

Elmhurst United Middle School is one of many schools across the state that experienced this firsthand. Helena Jack, the school’s music director, knows how critical music education is to the development of kids and has tried for years to bring a program back to Elmhurst. She came close in 2020, but all momentum was lost when the school went remote due to the pandemic. Students went home without instruments, and it was nearly impossible to teach music classes virtually.

“By February 2020, things were really starting to change with the mindset of students regarding music,” said Jack. “They went from saying ‘why do I have to do this’ to ‘when are we doing this and what do I have to wear to the performance?’ Suddenly, COVID-19 hits and everything goes away in a week.”

With students back to in-person classes and eager to make music, The Guitar Center Music Foundation and Elevate Oakland donation gives them the space and necessary musical instruments to finally have a sustainable program. Donated items include drums, violins and a state-of-the-art WhisperRoom, which allows them to record and rehearse in a soundproof booth.

To celebrate the new music room, The Guitar Center Music Foundation and Elevate Oakland hosted a surprise unveiling for students on Wednesday, February 16. The event featured Sheila E., the iconic “Queen of Percussion,” Oakland native and co-founder of Elevate Oakland, who spent the morning jamming with students. You can see video and photos from the event [HERE](https://www.dropbox.com/sh/i98ejk62ym89140/AAA3UiXtAxyHQdWT7ifOCVO_a?dl=0" \t "_blank).

“Being exposed to music early in my life had a profound impact on my development as an artist, so I am thrilled to be a part of the rebuild of Elmhurst United Middle School’s music program,” said Sheila E. “These students are so passionate about music, and I’m excited to see them grow into the next generation of artists.”

“Music education should be an essential part of a child’s curriculum because it's an enriching experience that creates lifelong benefits – from increased social skills to higher levels of confidence and self-esteem,” said Myka Miller-Jimenez, The Guitar Center Music Foundation executive director. “Guitar Center Music Foundation is committed to help support this program, and we can’t wait to see the artists it inspires for years to come.”

To learn more about The Guitar Center Music Foundation’s work to keep music education alive and available in schools across the country, visit [guitarcenterfoundation.org](http://guitarcenterfoundation.org/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank).

To learn more about how you can support “The Arts and Music in Schools – Funding Guarantee and Accountability Act,” a ballot initiative that, if passed by the voters of California this fall, will dramatically increase arts education funding in every preK-12 public school to the tune of roughly $800 million a year, without raising taxes, visit [https://voteartsandminds.org/sign-the-petition/](https://protect-us.mimecast.com/s/HIXuCDk6XVtn7GvkFWAWvf%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank).

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Photo file 1: GCMF\_ElevateOakland\_Photo1.JPG

Photo caption 1: Shelia E. presenting new instruments to the children at Elmhurst Elementary in Oakland Calif. on behalf of The Guitar Center Music Foundation and Elevate Oakland on Wednesday, February 16, 2022

Photo file 2: GCMF\_ElevateOakland\_Photo2.JPG

Photo caption 2: Children of Elmhurst Elementary School band showing off their gift bags from The Guitar Center Music Foundation and Elevate Oakland music room donation event on Wednesday, February 16, 2022

Photo file 3: GCMF\_ElevateOakland\_Photo3.JPG

Photo caption 3: Pictured L-R: Jason Hofmann, Lynn Mabry, Sheila E. and Yoshie Akiba of Elevate Oakland, pictured in the new Elmhurst Elementary music room in Oakland Calif., on Wednesday, February 16, 2022.

Photo file 4: GCMF\_ElevateOakland\_Photo4.JPG

Photo caption 4: Elmhurst Elementary students and their teacher Helena Jack (seated) are presented instruments for their brand new instruments on behalf of The Guitar Center Music Foundation and Elevate Oakland on Wednesday, February 16, 2022.

Photo file 5: GCMF\_ElevateOakland\_Photo5.JPG

Photo caption 5: Guitar Center Bay Area associates and the founders of Elevate Oakland, pictured with Myka Miller-Jimenez, The Guitar Center Music Foundation executive director (third from right), pictured in the new Elmhurst Elementary music room in Oakland Calif., on Wednesday, February 16, 2022.

**About Guitar Center Music Foundation**

The Guitar Center Music Foundation believes that music participation is an essential element in the fabric of an enduring society. The organization aims to keep music education alive and available in our nation’s schools and communities. Founded in 2005, this public charity has reached over 300,000 people through its grants of instruments to music education programs. These grant recipients, which give more people the opportunity to make music, include school music classrooms and community-based organizations.

**About Elevate Oakland**

Founded by Sheila E., Lynn Mabry, Yoshie Akiba of Yoshi’s Oakland and Jason Hofmann, Elevate Oakland is a nonprofit organization that works to support and empower Oakland’s youth by providing students with music and arts programs during the school day. Their mission to provide students with opportunities to engage in culturally vibrant art and music programming has led Elevate Oakland to partner with public schools to meet a wide variety of needs, ranging from artists in residence programs providing hands-on music curriculum during the school day to facilitating opportunities for students to perform alongside local professional musicians. To date, Elevate Oakland has successfully served over 3,000 youth at over 30 Oakland public schools. Across its programs, the focus is on utilizing music and the arts as a conduit to get students excited about learning, building towards a future where all young people have equitable access to music & arts education.

By working closely with Oakland public school educators and administrators, parents, and involved community members, Elevate Oakland strives to provide students access to mentoring, nurturing, instruction and training by dedicated professional artists and musicians, thereby filling the gaps in arts & music opportunities caused by spending cuts, and re-engaging the full potential of Oakland youth.

The Elevate Oakland Artists in Residence Program brings renowned artists from within the Bay Area community into Oakland public school classrooms, providing mentorship and learning opportunities for students and teachers alike. Our resident artists work one-on-one with educators to bring workshops, presentations and full curriculums to classrooms covering a variety of music and arts subjects.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:**

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