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**The Guitar Center Music Foundation replaces instruments for Marrero Middle School band in New Orleans**

— In a ceremony at the school on Friday, Sept. 30, 2022, The Guitar Center Music Foundation, alongside Save The Music Foundation and Music Rising (the natural relief fund of Mr. Holland’s Opus Foundation), presented Marrero Middle School Band in Jefferson Parish with a variety of instruments to replace those lost or damaged due to Hurricane Ida last year —

**WESTLAKE VILLAGE, Calif., October 26, 2022 —** The [Guitar Center Music Foundation](https://guitarcenterfoundation.kindful.com/) (GCMF), a nonprofit organization focused on granting instruments to music education and music therapy organizations, was a key figure in a recent program to get a particular school music program back on its feet after a devastating natural disaster event. Marrero Middle School, in Jefferson Parish in New Orleans, saw severe damage in 2021 due to Hurricane Ida, and many musical instruments were destroyed, damaged or lost. The Guitar Center Music Foundation, alongside Music Rising (the natural relief fund of Mr. Holland’s Opus Foundation) and Save The Music Foundation, was able to help the program replace these instruments with a large donation of instruments and other gear. In a special ceremony on Friday, September 30, 2022, the organizations teamed up at the school and presented the program with the entire haul – while enjoying a rousing performance from the Preservation Hall Jazz Band and remarks from school officials and representatives from the organizations.

GCMF has provided Marrero Middle School with a brand-new drum line, various brass instruments, and much-needed storage components; Music Rising and Save The Music Foundation have provided several dozen additional instruments. Local artist Josh Wingerter began fundraising efforts for the program last year (just one of multiple private fundraising campaigns spearheaded by community members), and though he was successful and raised a considerable amount of funding, he reached out to GCMF for additional assistance and got the ball rolling. The ceremony on September 30 represented the culmination of these grassroots efforts and the successful cooperation between GCMF and the other organizations.

Several individuals shared remarks at the ceremony, including Christina Conforto (Principal, Marrero Middle School), Dr. James Gray (Superintendent, Jefferson Parish Schools), Jeremy Williams (Marrero Middle School band director), Myka Miller (The Guitar Center Music Foundation Executive Director), Chiho Feindler (Save The Music Foundation Chief Program Officer), Greg Lambousy (New Orleans Jazz Museum Director) and Wendell Brunious (trumpet, Preservation Hall). Additional Guitar Center-affiliated personnel were in attendance, including Ryan Salinas (GC District Manager), Bryan Kerlec (GC Store Manager), Rob Dickason (Music & Arts – Repair Shop Manager) and Chad Braud (Music & Arts Ed Rep). Members of the Marrero Middle School band also got to experience a dream come true: performing “When the Saints Go Marching In” with the Preservation Hall Jazz Band, thanks to the efforts of Pamela Blackmon from the Preservation Hall Foundation.

Myka Miller stated, “It was so moving to see the kids playing again after almost two years without instruments due to COVID and the storm. In a city like New Orleans, where music is so integral to the culture, it was inspiring to see the parents and other students dancing and singing along to ‘When the Saints Go Marching In.’ The pride in the air was palpable and unlike any other city in America.”

Jeremy Williams remarked, “Ever since Hurricane Ida hit in August of 2021, I have been on a mission to rebuild the band back so we can play again. GCMF and the other organizations have graciously agreed to join this journey along the way. As you already know, the city of New Orleans is known around the globe for its music. When the band went silent, a piece of the city’s heart, soul, and culture went numb. Music is the center of culture here. In helping us rebuild, GCMF’s attention to detail has proven to me how much this project meant to them too. As an educator and musician, I know that money and physical objects can come and go, but in today’s world good humans can be hard to come by, and that is what we found when we connected with GCMF. Hurricane Ida was a tragic event, but in the end, the right connections happened, and we are so very grateful for that.”

View a video recap of the event at <https://vimeo.com/763934746>.

To learn more, visit <https://guitarcenterfoundation.kindful.com/>, or follow @GiveMusicLife on Twitter for more news or to discover ways to support The Guitar Center Music Foundation.

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Photo file 1: GCMF\_MarreroMS\_Group.JPG

Photo caption 1: Individuals involved in the ceremony at Marrero Middle School, in Jefferson Parish in New Orleans, on Friday, September 30, 2022, presenting the school’s music program with musical instruments to replace those destroyed, damaged or lost due to Hurricane Ida. Pictured L-R: Pamela Blackmon (Preservation Hall Foundation Programming & Development Associate); Greg Lambousy (New Orleans Jazz Museum Director); Chiho Feindler (Save The Music Foundation Chief Program Officer); Bryan Kerlec (Guitar Center Store Manager); Ryan Salinas (Guitar Center District Manager); Ryan Merritt (donor); Myka Miller (Guitar Center Music Foundation Executive Director); Jeremy Williams (Marrero MS Band Director); and Josh Wingerter (New Orleans-based artist).

Photo file 2: GCMF\_MarreroMS\_StudentsWithBand.JPG

Photo caption 2: Students of the Marrero Middle School band performing “When the Saints Go Marching In” with members of the Preservation Hall Jazz Band at the school on Friday, September 30, 2022.

Photo file 3: GCMF\_MarreroMS\_KidsWithWendell.JPG

Photo caption 3: Wendell Brunious (Preservation Hall trumpeter) pictured with members of the Marrero Middle School band, performing at the school on Friday, September 30, 2022.

ABOUT THE GUITAR CENTER MUSIC FOUNDATION

The Guitar Center Music Foundation was founded as a 501(c)(3) in 2005. Since its inception, the foundation has placed instruments in the hands of over 300,000 people nationwide through grants to qualifying music education and music therapy programs. The foundation’s mission is to support music education programs nationally by providing those in need with instruments and by advocating for the benefits of music education and music therapy. For more information about The Guitar Center Music Foundation, please visit <https://guitarcenterfoundation.kindful.com/>.

ABOUT SAVE THE MUSIC FOUNDATION

Save The Music Foundation is a 501(c)(3) music education nonprofit that helps students, schools, and communities reach their full potential through the power of making music. For 25 years, Save The Music (STM) has addressed systemic inequities in music education by investing in culturally rich communities across the US. Since its inception, STM has donated nearly $70M worth of instruments and technology to over 2,500 schools – impacting millions of students' lives. And we’re just getting started! Learn more at [savethemusic.org](http://savethemusic.org/).

ABOUT MR. HOLLAND’S OPUS FOUNDATION

The Mr. Holland’s Opus Foundation keeps music alive in our schools by providing vital support services to school districts, and new musical instruments to underfunded music programs nationwide, giving under-represented youth access to the many benefits of music education, leading them to success in school, and inspiring creativity and expression through playing music.

PRESERVATION HALL MISSION STATEMENT

Protect, preserve and perpetuate New Orleans music and culture.

THE NEW ORLEANS JAZZ MUSEUM MISSION STATEMENT

The New Orleans Jazz Museum celebrates the history of jazz, in all its forms, through dynamic interactive exhibits, multi-generational educational programming, research facilities, and engaging musical performances. The Jazz Museum enhances New Orleans’ ongoing cultural renaissance by providing diverse resources for musicians and music lovers of all languages and nationalities. We fully explore America’s quintessential musical art form in the city where jazz was born.

ABOUT THE GUITAR CENTER

The Guitar Center is a leading retailer of musical instruments, lessons, repairs and rentals in the United States. With nearly 300 stores across the country and as one of the top direct sales websites in the industry, the Guitar Center has helped people make music for more than 50 years. The Guitar Center also provides customers with musician-based services, including lessons where musicians of all ages and skill levels can learn to play instruments in many musical genres. The Guitar Center also offers an on-site maintenance and repairs service called GC Repairs and GC Rentals, a program offering easy rentals of instruments and other sound reinforcement gear. The Guitar Center’s sister brands include Music & Arts, which operates more than 200 stores specializing in band and orchestral instruments for sale and rental, serving teachers, band directors, college professors and students. Another sister company, Musician’s Friend, is a leading direct marketer of musical instruments in the United States. For more information about Guitar Center, please visit [www.guitarcenter.com](http://www.guitarcenter.com).

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