

A+ Community Music Festival July 28

To Celebrate the New A+ Childrens Academy Community School

The inaugural event for the A+ Children's Academy Community School (ACAC) will be a festive prelude to what is anticipated as the most innovative public elementary school program in Central Ohio. In partnership with the Jazz Arts Group's Jazz in the Schools program, A+ Children's Academy is hosting the first annual A+ Fun Family Affair on July 28, 2012 from 11AM to 3PM on the school grounds, 100 Obetz Road, Columbus, Ohio 43207. Admission is free.

The theme for the festival is "I Have A Voice". The headliner act for the festival will feature musicians from the Jazz Arts Group presenting a program at 1:45PM, "Jazz Is Spoken Here," which, in keeping with the festival theme, emphasizes the importance of building a strong community that is inclusive of everyone. The program also gives a message of anti-bullying and tolerance. Renowned drummer Reggie Jackson, and Skip Sams, a Southside native and the Artistic Director of A+ Children's Academy will present the program. Also scheduled at the festival are Joe Lambert and

Joanne Blum who will be leading a fun sing-along as well as lead in a community drum circle at 12PM. One of the highlights of the early afternoon will feature some of the children from the community presenting a musical program about the importance of recycling.

The festivities will also include many free activities, including: face painting, snow cones, cotton candy, popcorn, balloons, and several carnival games, including a life-size version of the popular game, Angry Birds. A raffle will be held at the end of the event for families who have registered at the admission (free) gate. Additional raffle tickets may be purchased and all the monies will go to by musical instruments for the school. Donations for the raffle and for musical instruments are still being accepted.

The music on stage at the festival are but just a small taste of the many genre's of music that will be taught at the new A+ Children's Academy. This tuition-free elementary school is unique in that, in addition to teaching general music education, it will

implement the performing arts of music, movement and drama, to assist in teaching all core-curriculum subjects. "Our school does not audition children and it is not our intention to try to create superstars" said Artistic Director, Skip Sams, M.Mus. The mission is to provide children, grades one through five, with an education that is experiential and will be applicable to the child's growth throughout their educational and professional careers. Sams said the school will be collaborating with Columbus' Jazz Arts Group and the Columbus Ballet Met, as well as highly-qualified dance and instrumental professionals "to give our students a wide spectrum of opportunities to explore many forms of music and movement so that they will gain a great appreciation for all the arts, an even greater appreciation for themselves as they become culturally balanced."

School principal Mindi Hardgrow knows the far south side community very well. She is a south side native and has served as president of the Scioto Southland Civic Association

and is currently the president of the Far South Columbus Area Commission. Hardgrow knows that through focusing on the whole child, a community school will provide students the opportunities that they may not otherwise have in a traditional school system. "Community schools allow educators to form relationships with community stakeholders to ensure that all children are given opportunities through music, art, extracurricular activities, training, and family services. We are able to focus on the individual child and their role in society." As principal of A+ Children's Academy she is excited about the inclusion of performing arts into all parts of the core curriculum. "Our program develops and provides services for the students and teachers that will stimulate creativity and enhance the learning experience in all subjects."

Sams said the festival is just the first of many. This first year is just a brief preview of what the school will teach. The vision is that future music festivals will celebrate the end of the school year in early June. Sams said "we will feature music and dance groups from the Columbus community and we will always reprise some favorite student programs from the year."

Bob Evans
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