



Saint Viator Students Collect Band Instruments for Their Counterparts in Belize

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Students and several Viatorians show off the instruments collected during the "Share the Music" drive. (photo by Chris Santucci '12)

St. Hubert's in Hoffman Estates, St. Thomas of Villanova in Palatine and St. Zachary's in Des Plaines.

They asked families to check their closets for unused instruments, and in response they received tenor saxophones, flutes, piccolos, trombones, trumpets, clarinets, alto saxophones, snare drums, a drum set and even three violins.

However, they still seek financial donations in order to repair and refurbish the instruments. Interested supporters may send donations to Saint Viator High School, 1213 E. Oakton St., Arlington Heights, IL, 60004, care of Tom Seaman, band director.

At their fall concert on Friday, when members of the concert, symphonic and jazz bands all performed, their director, Tom Seaman, formally turned over the instruments to the Clerics of St. Viator. Br. James Lewnard, C.S.V., a social studies teacher and musician himself, accepted on their behalf.

He described how the Viatorians started their mission in the coastal village of Corozal Town in Belize in 1998, and that it now serves 24 surrounding parishes, 22 elementary schools and most recently, the high school.

The Rev. Dan Hall, C.S.V., helped start the mission for the Viatorians. He now heads up the social studies department at Saint Viator High School in Arlington Heights, but he continues to return to Belize every spring.

During his last visit, he became aware of the high school's growing band program and the hardships they faced in obtaining suitable instruments.

"I noticed that the heads on their drumsticks were made up of balled up duct tape," Fr. Hall said. "Others didn't even have drumsticks, and a lot of the instruments seemed like they were just barely holding together."

Saint Viator High School band students called it their "Share the Music" drive, and it turned out to be resounding success.

A collection drive started last month to gather band instruments for St. Viator Vocational High School in the Corozal District of Belize, already has drawn more than 50 instruments.

Students turned to their home parishes and elementary school band programs to start the drive, including St. Alphonsus in Prospect Heights; St. Emily's in Mount Prospect; St. James and Our Lady of the Wayside, both in Arlington Heights;

“My first thought was that maybe our Saint Viator band program could help,” Fr. Hall adds. “I thought they might be able to donate instruments, and in the process learn a little more about students like themselves in this part of Central America.”

Corozal’s high school band program was started as part of an initiative by the country’s Governor General, Sir Colville Young, as a way to provide young people with positive opportunities.

Since the band’s inception three years ago, it has grown to include nearly 100 students, Hall says, and most recently won a national band competition in Belize.