

The Mercury News

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Redwood City parents plan benefit concert to save school music

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Posted: 05/27/2010 08:20:26 PM PDT

Updated: 05/27/2010 11:54:58 PM PDT

Budget cuts are threatening to silence the boom of a string bass and the drone of a trombone in Redwood City elementary schools next year, but a group of dedicated parents aren't going to let the music die without a fight.

About 50 parents have helped plan Saturday's "Groovin' in the Grove" benefit concert, part of an effort to raise \$100,000 to keep music alive for the 900 fifth- through eighth-graders who participate in instrumental music in the Redwood City School District.

"We know there is stronger and stronger interest on the part of students and families to get their kids into the (music) program, particularly families that don't have the financial resources to put their kids into private lessons," said Jo-Ann Sockolov, president of the Redwood City Education Foundation.

Foundation volunteers say they're expecting about 500 people to attend the all-day concert at Sequoia High School, which will feature performances from about a dozen bands in the afternoon and four music groups in an evening concert.

The effort got a boost recently from Eric and Lori Lochtefeld, the new owners of the Fox Theatre in downtown Redwood City, who have signed on as the lead sponsors of the event.

While the district's proposed budget for the 2010-11 school year won't be out until June 9, the \$315,000 budgeted for music was slated to be cut last year before an infusion of federal stimulus money staved off the program's elimination.

This year,

officials project cuts of between \$4.7 million and \$10.6 million out of an estimated \$78 million budget, depending on the extent of state reductions, and are planning to lay off 100 employees. With the one-time stimulus funds gone this year, many expect music to return to the list of potential cuts.

The foundation is also planning to co-host a fundraising 5K run on July 4 with the city's parks and recreation department.

Sockolov acknowledged that the foundation's one-time fundraising goal of \$100,000 won't be enough to permanently fund the program, or even cover its whole budget this year.

Still, Board President Dennis McBride said the district may be able to use the funds to help pay for a scaled-back music program.

McBride, whose two grown sons participated in the program when they were younger, was emotionally torn while taking in a recent end-of-the-year student concert attended by about 800 parents.

"You're just sitting there with this big smile on your

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face thinking, 'what a great thing for the kids,' and in the back of your mind you're thinking, 'this could be the last one. Enjoy it,' " he said. "It's just terrible."

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IF YOU GO

WHAT: "Groovin" in the Grove," a benefit concert to raise \$100,000 for the Redwood City School District's instrumental music program.

WHEN: Saturday, 1-4:30 p.m., and 6:30 p.m.

WHERE: Sequoia High School, 1201 Brewster Ave., Redwood City

COST: Tickets to the afternoon concert are \$10 for general admission and \$20 for a family (two adults and as many as three children); tickets to the evening concert are \$30 for general admission and \$40 for premier admission, which includes preferred seating and an after-party; an all-day, all-inclusive pass is available for \$50.

MORE INFO: www.rcef.org/music

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