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Broadening Horizons

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The University of Dayton's New Horizons Band has received an $8,600 grant from the Montgomery County Arts and Cultural District to encourage music-making by senior citizens and support intergenerational concerts with local schools.

The New Horizons Band encourages adults 50 and older to learn to play a musical instrument for the first time or to return to playing an instrument after years of inactivity. The University music department and Office of Continuing Education and Life Long Learning sponsor the program, which has about 70 members in concert and jazz bands. Music professor Linda Hartley is director, assisted by Don Donnett and Tremon Kizer.

The grant will support two free concerts, open to the public:

- A combined concert with Dayton area Catholic elementary schools at 1:30 p.m. Sunday, March 20, University of Dayton Kennedy Union Ballroom.
- "By Seniors For Seniors," concert band and jazz band performances at 2 p.m. Sunday, April 3, Kettering Fairmont High School Auditorium. This concert will feature guest conductor Roy Ernst, founder of the New Horizons International Music Association, which is celebrating its 20th anniversary.

On Friday, April 1, Ernst will also give a short course on the medical and physical benefits of playing music as part of the University of Dayton's Learning in Retirement program.

The grant will continue the band's work with senior centers to promote the benefits of playing music. The grant provides funds to transport residents of senior centers to instrument "petting zoos," where musical instruments will be demonstrated and participants will be able to try out instruments.

"Band members are very supportive of our students and faculty, and they support the arts in Dayton as well," said Hartley, adding that she has seen New Horizons Band members in attendance at every University concert in the past 10 years. "I find that our members appreciate not only music, but also the act of learning. Our educational and relaxed environment provides the opportunity to learn something new at every lesson or rehearsal."

The band's members come from 22 local communities and have an average age of 70.7 years. The Dayton New Horizons Band formed in 2000 and is a member of the International New Horizons Music Association, which has more than 170 groups worldwide.

"It's a great opportunity for people who always wanted to play a musical instrument in a concert band," said Brother Phil Aaron, S.M., a 78-year-old trombone player who has been in the band since its inception. "And it's a very accepting atmosphere and a great opportunity to meet new people with like interests."

Research shows participation in musical activities provides a broad array of social, physical and mental benefits including intellectual stimulation, relationship with past musical pursuits, reduction of depression and increased stimulation of one's immune system as well as a reason for pursuing life.

For more information on the New Horizons Band, contact the Office of Continuing Education and Life Long Learning at 937-229-2347, or visit the related link.

For more information, contact Cameron Fullam, assistant director of media relations, at 937-229-3256 or fullam@udayton.edu.