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All the "Good News" that's fit to print!

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Reaching for the Stars!

*Fundraiser helps bring music to
the community.*

Faye Meyer, a teacher at the Community Conservatory located in Doylestown, holds a saxophone painted by Bucks County artist Taylor Oughton. The fundraiser, held last month, had a Mardi Gras theme. See story and photos on page 8.

Photo by Brenda Lange

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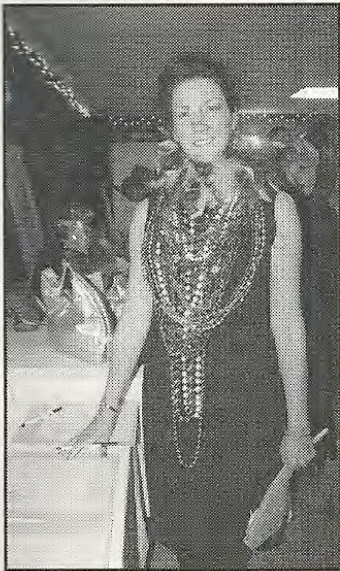


Cover Story Community Conservatory Mardi Gras Fundraiser

story/photos
by Brenda Lange

Wearing headdresses and boas of rainbow-hued feathers, sequined masks and multi-colored dangling beaded necklaces, more than 125 revelers celebrated Mardi Gras recently as they helped raise money for the Community Conservatory, located in Doylestown.

"Our goal was to have fun and raise money," said Mary-jo



Maureen Gatto of Doylestown bids on items in the silent auction.

May, Development Director.

Judging by the turnout, the atmosphere, and the amount of items sold by both silent and live auctions, they did just that.

A nine-member band, made up of Conservatory faculty, entertained the group, which dined on Creole style food prepared by the Gardenville Hotel, site of the soiree.

"This is the first time we've thrown a big party, and people really got into the spirit of the evening," added Mary-jo.

"Folks had a good time, bid on auction items and were quite enthusiastic."

All proceeds from the eve-



Les Garnas and Carol Landis of Buckingham enjoy the Mardi Gras.

ning benefit the Community Conservatory's outreach programs: Prelude Project providing music, dance and visual art therapies for children and adults with special needs; Arts for Seniors, providing discounted lessons and free concerts; Neighborhood Notes, offering peer mentoring and free classes in music, art and acting for at-risk children in low-income Bucks County neighborhoods; and the Tuition Assistance Program, enabling families facing economic hardships to pursue arts education and performance opportunities.

Arts for Seniors serves senior centers and residents of assisted living facilities and nursing homes.

These programs can be purely to entertain or can be interactive, where the performers get the audience involved.

Others are meant to teach the residents, such as the choir started at Neshaminy Manor and the art classes held at Lakeview, Pine Run's assisted living facility.

Neighborhood Notes is a relatively new program, in which junior and senior high school students from the Central Bucks area volunteer

to work with at-risk youth in some of Bucks County's distressed neighborhoods.

These volunteers are taught by Conservatory faculty in how to teach art, music and drama to children up to age 12.

"The whole idea is to give the young kids alternatives and a sense of self-worth," said Mary-jo.

"Some of these children deal with stressful situations in their homes and neighborhoods, and don't always have the best environment.

Giving them alternatives for self-expression seems to help."

She said a survey, of sorts,

is done with the participants in the Neighborhood Notes program; questions about themselves asked when they join the program, and asked again after they've participated for several months.

"You can really see the difference," she said.

"We get much more positive responses the second time."

One of the highlights of Neighborhood Notes has been the Mural painting program. When a suitable wall couldn't be found in Bristol Township last summer for this project, township officials had one built in a local park.

The finished product includes the children's mural on one side and dozens of little handprints with personal notes on the other.

The Community Conservatory is a non-profit organization established in 1988, with nearly 50 faculty, which provides education in music, art and drama through private and group lessons.

Visit their website at www.communityconservatory.org or call 215-340-7979 for more information.



Kay and Steve Rock (Executive Director of the Conservatory) of Doylestown enjoy the evening.