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Contact:
Kate Salter, Development and
Communications Coordinator
920-426-3993 or
Kate@OshkoshAreaCF.org

Ukulele in the Classroom sparks musical interest

OSHKOSH, WI — Beckie Lehman understands the value of musical literacy. As a music teacher at Valley Christian School, she was awarded a Celebrate Education grant by the Mid-Morning Kiwanis Club of Oshkosh and the Zmolek Family Education Fund of the Oshkosh Area Community Foundation for Ukulele in the Classroom: a program designed to strike a chord in her students.

“The excitement to play the ukulele poured out of our elementary students and even affected our middle and high school students as well,” says Lehman. “I had my high school choir class clamoring to open them and help begin tuning the ukuleles. We also had many families come forth and say that their children asked for ukuleles for Christmas.”



The Celebrate Education grant allowed Lehman to purchase ukuleles for her students as a portable, inexpensive and rather popular instrument. The benefits to adding ukuleles to her students' repertoire include the mellow sound they make, which is ideal for teaching ear training, the ability to sing while playing the instrument and the increased difficulty to play it.

“In our third and fourth grades we focus on note and rhythm reading by playing the recorder,” says Lehman. “Then the fifth graders use the ukuleles to build on that foundation. I've found that their ability to hear if their instruments are tuned correctly increased significantly from their tuning practice.”

By introducing a new instrument into the classroom, Lehman has witnessed an increase in students' confidence and musical literacy. The ukulele provides the ability to learn about song structure, chords and alternate rhythms in strumming patterns that students wouldn't normally learn with a recorder.

Celebrate Education is an annual event hosted by the Oshkosh Area Community Foundation in partnership with the Mid-Morning Kiwanis Club of Oshkosh, Oshkosh Chamber of Commerce, Wisconsin Public Service Foundation, Oshkosh Area School District and the UWO College of

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www.OshkoshAreaCF.org
230 Ohio Street | Suite 100 | Oshkosh, WI 54902
Phone 920-426-3993 | Fax 920-426-6997

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Education and Human Services, with grants awarded from funds such as the Edward and Belle Rudoy Fund and the Zmolek Family Education Fund of the Oshkosh Area Community Foundation. Learn more about Celebrate Education and grants that have been awarded in the past by visiting OshkoshAreaCF.Org/Celebrate_Education_2016.cfm.

Celebrate Education will be held at the Oshkosh Convention Center from 4:30 to 6 p.m. on March 21, 2016. Register online at oshkoshareacf.org or call 920-426-3993 by March 16. Join us in recognizing exceptional educators, innovative administrators and dedicated volunteers who enrich the lives of students in our community.

The Oshkosh Area Community Foundation is a nonprofit charitable organization created by and for the people of Winnebago County, Waushara County, Green Lake County and Ripon. Through charitable giving, the Community Foundation strives to make our communities thrive. For more information, please call 920-426-3993.

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