

Kids learn about music, recycling

Jennifer Burke/Catholic Courier

They came through the wind and snow, and they brought their garbage with them.

Glenn McClure and Ted Canning, two members of the McClure Artist Guild that work with Young Audiences of Rochester, came to St. Rita's School in Webster to perform their Great Garbage Concert Jan. 23, a day when many other schools in the area were closed because of high winds, blowing snow and bitter cold.

Their visit provided students a chance to learn about helping the environment. Students sitting on the floor of the gymnasium interacted with the two performers from the moment the concert started. McClure and Canning opened the show by singing "This Land Is Your Land," and as soon as students recognized the song, they chimed in.

For the next 45 minutes, students learned how everyday items such as hubcaps, toilet floats and tin cans can be turned into musical instruments instead of trash. McClure and Canning let the children guide the direction of the concert, asking how they should use each piece of "garbage" to make a noise. This resulted in McClure beating a hubcap with a stick and Canning blowing through a discarded hose from a vac-

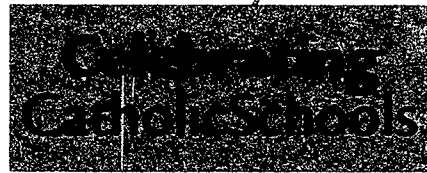


Mike Crupi/Catholic Courier

During a performance Jan. 23 at St. Rita's School in Webster, Glenn McClure, a member of McClure Artist Guild, gives students a lesson on recycling and making music. Six-year-old Griffin Virgil (from left), 8-year-old Megan Quinn, 5-year-old Mary Grace Charleton and 7-year-old Danny Passafuime share a laugh as they turn everyday items into musical instruments.

uum cleaner before swinging it around his head while the students chanted, "Faster, faster!"

Later, the performers chose five students to "stir into the pile of garbage," giving them a chance to play some of the newly created musical instruments before McClure unveiled his garbophone. McClure later treated students to "Yankee Doodle" and "The Stars and Stripes



Forever" using the garbophone, which he described as a "kind of a cross between a xylophone and a pile of garbage." It consists of an outlet box, part of a blowtorch, a dog bowl,

the cover of an oxygen-tank nozzle, a hubcap, dull saw blades, a piece of pipe and a faucet.

Second-grader Emily Tomer said she liked the concert because "they were being funny and it was really cool that they made instruments out of garbage." Her classmate, Lauren Navarro, agreed, saying her favorite part was when McClure and Canning sang along with their music. Second-grader, Olivia Zucaro found the experience to be a pleasant surprise.

"I didn't know we'd have as much fun as we did," Olivia said.

McClure has been performing the Great Garbage Concert since 1988, and Canning joined him in 1993. McClure said that some children learn better by moving their bodies or building something than by sitting at a desk. These children are not bad at learning, but just learn differently, he added.

McClure describes the concerts he performs in as "a way for educators to engage students of lots of different learning styles. It's taking environmental education to its silliest frontier. The work that we do in concerts and workshops ties directly into curriculum ... and is answering the call that our state education directors have been giving us these days, this call to reach out to all different types of learners."

Parents ask for textbook funds, scholarships

George P. Matysek Jr./CNS

BALTIMORE — Thousands of parents with children in Catholic schools would like to see Maryland maintain state funding of a textbook-loan program in nonpublic schools and allow teachers at Catholic schools more flexibility in an existing teacher scholarship program.

These issues were at the top of the agenda for parents who met with their lawmakers Jan. 8 during 17 legislative forums throughout the state.

The forums were organized by the Maryland Federation of Catholic-School Families to educate members of the General Assembly about Catholic-school issues.

Although the state is facing a budget deficit of more than \$700 million, Catholic-school families urged their representatives to preserve funding for nonreligious textbooks in Catholic, private and other religious schools.

They argued that Catholic and other nonpublic schools educated ap-

proximately 145,000 students last year, saving the state more than \$1.25 billion in per-pupil expenditures.

"We all pay taxes and we sacrifice to send our children to Catholic school," said Zena Bissally, who attended the forum at St. Agnes School in Catonsville along with several hundred others.

"I need some help," said Bissally, noting that saving for tuition means there are no vacations, dining out or trips to the movies for her family.

During the 2003 legislative session, the General Assembly reduced textbook funding in the fiscal year 2004 budget to \$3 million, half the amount that was originally approved in the 2000 legislative session.

Because of the reduction, the 2004-05 per-pupil allocation for textbooks at most nonpublic schools will be reduced to approximately \$25, down from \$36 per student for the 2003-04 school year and from \$57 per student the prior year. The per-pupil allotment will remain \$90 at schools with a high percentage of low-income families.

Mary Ellen Russell, coordinator of the Maryland Federation of Catholic-School Families, said she would like to see funding restored at least to the \$5 million level proposed in the last legislative session by Gov. Robert L. Ehrlich Jr. before lawmakers cut it by \$2 million.

Textbook supporters and key legislators said they expect the governor to include money for textbooks in his upcoming budget, though he has not indicated how much it would be. If the governor includes funding, it must be approved by the legislature, which has the power to reduce or eliminate it.

Russell said her organization is pushing lawmakers to approve budget language that would allow nonpublic schools to use their textbook allocation to purchase educational computer hardware and software in addition to textbooks.

During the forums, families asked legislators to support a bill sponsored by Democratic Sen. Nathaniel McFadden, of Baltimore, to allow recipients of the Maryland State Teacher Scholarship to perform the

service obligation required by their scholarship by teaching in nonpublic as well as public schools.

During the forum at St. Agnes, Delegates Steven J. DeBoy Sr. and James E. Malone Jr. of Baltimore County said they supported textbook funding.

Sen. Edward J. Kasemeyer of Baltimore County said he opposed it because he believes public schools continue to have "great needs."

All three Democrat lawmakers said they support the proposed changes in the teacher scholarship program.

In an interview with *The Catholic Review*, Baltimore's archdiocesan newspaper, he said it is likely that the funding would be approved.

Ronald J. Valenti, Baltimore superintendent of Catholic schools, said parents are passionate and committed to an issue they see as a matter of fairness.

"It's a continual responsibility on our part to demand economic justice," he said. "Our parents should not be penalized for electing to send their children to nonpublic schools."