

Art is hands-on in festival programs

By Ceili Cornelius
Correspondent

The Luthier Program at Sisters High School is an offshoot of Sisters Folk Festival's Americana Project. A luthier is a craftsman who builds and repairs string instruments.

It's become a favorite class at Sisters High School.

"Building my own guitar was so memorable. The process was so much fun from start to finish and it was so rewarding to see the finished product," said student guitar builder Rylee Funk.

In 2005, woods teacher Tony Cosby wanted to create a class where students would have the opportunity to build an instrument. After the first year of the class, the Americana Project and Sisters Folk Festival provided some funding to keep the class going. The grant and foundation funding helped to buy supplies to build the instruments.

The pre-requisite for the class is the Woodworking I class where students first learn to build an Adirondack chair. They can then move on to the next term of the class, Woodworking II.

In Woodworking II, students work throughout the whole trimester constructing guitars or ukuleles. Working with the help of one of the best luthiers in the Northwest, Jayson Bowerman (Breedlove Guitars), they have been able to produce 30 guitars per year.

An additional class has been building ukuleles for the past 11 years, until the passing of Bill MacDonald, who was the primary instructor on building the ukuleles. Bill, who was hired by SFF, and his students also worked with David Perkins and Marcy Edwards on building ukuleles, but with changes in their lives, the class primarily builds guitars now.

"There is something about starting with just a pile of lumber and then constructing something that plays music for these students I see as very transformative. It is almost like birthing a child — you work so hard to create something beautiful," said Cosby.

"I'm so glad that I had the opportunity to do something so special that will stay with me forever," said Funk.

Adult volunteers come in and give their time every



PHOTO BY JAY MATHER

day during the class to assist students with the construction of their guitars. Those volunteers include Kerry Bott, Gabrielle Franke, Bob Lawton, Jim Naibert, Betsy Forrest Robb, and Ed Fitz.

At the end of the class every year, the students hold a Luthier showcase where they learn a song together led by Brad Tisdell, Creative Director of the Sisters Folk Festival. It is a place where the students can show off their creation of the year to their classmates and parents.

Some years, a student creates a guitar for the community arts fundraiser event,

My Own Two Hands. The fundraiser is vital to the continuation of the festival's work. The Luthier Program and Americana Project are all made possible by community support of the arts in education.

"We get to see firsthand the difference a music, visual arts, or dance education opportunity can make in a child's life. These opportunities are no longer available in most public schools," said Steven Remington, SFF development director.

Every year, artists from around the community donate items for the auction

fundraiser that is usually a party event at Ponderosa Forge. This year, due to COVID-19 restrictions, the auction went virtual, where patrons could bid on the donated art online. SFF also put on a livestream concert event on the Saturday of the fundraiser weekend featuring performances from David Jacobs-Strain and Beth Wood, and never-before-seen videos of musicians from the festival filmed in the past year.

The event proved to be a success, helping to keep programs going in the schools and throughout the community.



Sisters Folk Festival livestream

The Sisters Area Chamber of Commerce is proud to support the artistic vitality of Sisters Folk Festival and the beauty of Sisters Country by bringing you the **livestream of this weekend's Close to Home 2 concerts**, September 11-13, wherever you are. To access the livestream go to event link: <https://cth2livestream.eventbrite.com>



SISTERS AREA
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
866.549.0252 541.549.0251
www.SistersCountry.com

