



JOLENE GUZMAN/Itemizer-Observer

Wyatt Button, LaCreole Middle School eighth-grader, will head to The Big Apple to sing in Carnegie Hall.

START SPREADIN' THE NEWS

LaCreole's Button heads to New York City to sing in Carnegie Hall

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

DALLAS — Anna Jackson couldn't contain herself when she found out LaCreole Middle School eighth-grader Wyatt Button had been selected to perform in the 2017 Middle School Honors Choir at Carnegie Hall this summer.

"I squealed a lot," said Jackson, LaCreole's choir teacher.

She nominated Wyatt for the opportunity, saying he is one of the most talented singers she's worked with.

The professional musicians who select students for the choir from the thousands who are nominated must have agreed.

She received notice that he had been selected on March 15 and had the privilege of telling Wyatt he was heading to New York.

"I was ecstatic. I was trying to act not super surprised, but it was hard to contain all the excitement," Wyatt said. "I think it's an amazing opportunity that I get."

The Middle School Honors Performance Series includes choir, band and orchestra performances.

Junior finalists in the three categories spend five days in New York City, June 22-26, working with professional musicians, performing and touring the city.

Wyatt found out in May that Jackson had nominated him when he received a letter in the mail about application process.

He didn't know much about the Honors Performance Series, which has a middle school, high school and young adult program.

"I wasn't like totally aware of what it was, but one day I

got a thing in the mail that said I was nominated," he said. "I was really excited and I thought it was something cool that I thought I could work to do."

He had until October to submit a recorded audition. He and Jackson selected the songs "Where is Love?" from the musical "Oliver!" and Leonard Cohen's, "Hallelujah." They recorded the songs in LaCreole's choir room.

"I was nervous and I could hear it whenever I would listen to my recording," Wyatt said. "At one point, it just kind of clicked to me that I don't need to be nervous; I could just sing."

Wyatt discovered early he enjoyed singing.

"I've always loved music since I was really little. I joined choir in sixth grade and kept going, kept doing it throughout middle school,"

Wyatt said. "I like that you get to express yourself. There are so many songs out there, so there are ones you can really, truly relate to."

This will be Wyatt's first trip to New York.

"It's an iconic place for music and theater, so I'm really excited about just being there," he said. "I really hope to make new friends, and I'm excited to explore New York and learn new music."

Wyatt wants to head back to New York someday.

"I have dreams of being on Broadway," he said.

Before that can happen, Wyatt will be busy raising money for his trip this summer.

He plans to hold a garage sale, bake sale and a movie night fundraising to pay for his excursion.

"It will take a lot, but it will be worth it," he said.

City approves adding golf course to UGB

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

DALLAS — Dallas Golf Club's application to be included in the city's urban growth boundary was approved by the Dallas City Council without conditions that an extension of the Rickreall Creek Trail be included.

The Polk County Board of Commissioners, which also must approve the application, is scheduled to deliberate on the matter on April 26.

Andrew Stamp, attorney for Dallas Golf Club, said the owners objected to the provisions to build the trail through the property based on safety, cost and space concerns. The proposal to build the trail was first proposed by Dallas Golf Club, but the owners discovered it wouldn't be feasible without putting trail users close to playable areas of the golf course.

David Brinker, agent of the owner who has been associated with the club for 19 years, said inclusion in urban growth boundary is needed for the course to develop the property to include a restaurant, a 20-space RV Park and expand the pro shop. Its current conditional use permit with Polk County doesn't allow for those improvements.

He said the changes are needed to make the business profitable.

"The only way to make money at a golf course, is when people quit playing golf, for them to stay there for a while," Brinker said.

The application with the trail included was approved by planning commissions for the city and the county.

A trail route had not been determined, but course owners said there are only two options, neither of which is safe without precautions such as netting.

Stamp said there isn't room on the south side of the course, and neighboring property owners in the Ceres Gleann development objected to a trail on the north side, saying it would be too close to their homes.

Ceres Gleann residents packed the Dallas Civic Center Monday night to voice their concerns about building a trail on the north side of the course.

Councilors Kelly Gabliks and Jackie Lawson asked why the applicant included the trail to the begin with.

Stamp admitted the course owners should have studied that provision of their application sooner.

"We kind of backed into that," Stamp said. "We originally thought, a trail, that's a great idea. That's great. Let's do it. It wasn't until we were able to start looking at the mechanics of it that we realized it was problematic. I guess that is our fault. We should have done a better job from the get-go of realizing that."

Stamp asked the city to approve the application without that requirement.

Brinker said the course may consider closing if it were not included in the urban growth boundary.

"Most likely if this does not pass and we could not do improvements, we would look very closely at closing," Brinker said.

Gabliks wanted to change the last condition to give the course more time to find a viable trail route, and made a motion to that effect.

Councilor Micky Garus made a motion to amend Gabliks' proposal to strike the conditions requiring a trail. That amendment was approved.

The subsequent vote on the amended motion passed 6-2, with Gabliks and Councilor Ken Woods Jr. voting no.



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