

BUSINESS COURIER

Friday, February 19, 2010

West Chester Academy of Music now serves more than 500 kids

Business Courier of Cincinnati - by [Lauren Shellito](#) Courier Contributor

If the **West Chester Academy of Music** had a theme song it would be scales. Piano scales, violin scales, cello scales and even voice scales are the opening to every lesson, and there is always a lesson starting.

“When you’re at a conservatory, you always hear people practicing and it’s inspiring,” said owner and piano teacher Patsy Rabinowitz.

Rabinowitz founded the West Chester Academy of Music in 2007 after her neighbors complained about the noise coming from the piano lessons she gave at her home. She was the only teacher, and her small group of players were her only students.

But her school didn’t stay small for long. Over the past three years, the academy has grown to over 500 students and 24 instructors.

“We were very blessed,” said Rabinowitz. “I think there’s a real need for quality music instruction in the area and we have some top-notch people teaching.”

The instructors may be one of the reasons the academy has grown so fast. Judith Delzell, a music education professor at **Miami University**, said the most important factor in a good music school is the quality of the faculty.

“They must be fine musicians, have a good background in understanding how children learn music, and they must be committed to working with young people as they strive to develop their music abilities,” she said. All of the teachers at the West Chester Academy of Music have at least a bachelor’s degree in music education or performance. Many have advanced degrees and substantial professional experience as performers.

Johanna Klett is one of those instructors. A picture from one of the students hanging on the wall of her piano studio reads, “I like my ‘peano’ just as much as I like my ‘peano’ teacher.”

“Things like that really make me love my job,” Klett said as she pointed to it. She started teaching at the academy in 2008 after getting her master’s degree in cello performance from Miami University. When Klett started she only taught six students on Saturdays. Now she has enough students to teach full time.

“It’s been exciting to see this place grow, but not surprising,” said Klett. “Music, when presented in a positive environment, just infects, in a good way.”

The only business strategy Rabinowitz can credit for the academy’s growth is creating long-term students by introducing kids to music at a young age in the “Music Pups” program for children under 4, and group keyboard lessons for young beginners.

“We strive to create a nurturing environment to keep kids involved in music,” said Rabinowitz.

Debbie Creath’s son has been taking piano lessons at the West Chester Academy of Music for three years. Creath has referred the academy to many of her friends, and said she is sure they have done the same.

“Word of mouth is really the best recommendation you can get,” she said.

The academy, on Princeton-Glendale Road, has undergone two renovations to accommodate the growing number of students. The first, in 2008, added a few extra studios. The second renovation, which was finished in September, added more studios, another large studio for group piano lessons and another waiting area.

The building can’t get any bigger, but the students keep coming. Even though a half-hour weekly private lesson costs \$92 per month,

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numbers continued to expand during the recession.

Trisha Weil works extra on the weekends as a nurse to pay for her children's music lessons. Her son plays the piano and her daughter takes voice and piano lessons. She said classes have been invaluable in constantly challenging her children and giving them confidence.

"Music lessons are not an extracurricular activity, they are part of my kids' education," she said.

lshellito@bizjournals.com | (513) 337-9432

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