



By Carolyn Lee

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The three different Chase County Schools music departments are richer, thanks to donations from the Pom Poms, the organization that supports music in the schools.

Most recently, the Pom Poms donated \$4,000 to each of the three programs, with the teachers deciding what to use the money for.

Pom Poms President Merinda Kahle said the organization decided to make the donation open ended, “so they can do them (purchases) on their own rather than coming to us.”

In addition to that donation, the Pom Poms have also donated about \$2,700 to have the piano in the elementary music room refurbished. It should be back in the classroom soon.

The organization also spent about \$500 for the high school vocal music department for risers and a cart to transport scenery and props. It also spent \$2,000 for a chime set for the high school band department.

Kahle said teachers approach the group with requests. In addition, the Pom Poms ask the teachers, “What needs do you have above budgeted items?”



The Pom Poms’ money is raised through concession stands at school events.

In the elementary music department, teacher Amy Walworth decided to purchase instruments to either replace or enlarge the “band” in the department.

Those instruments include a djembe and a dombek, both African drums, temple blocks, wind chimes, alto and soprano xylophones and a bass metalophone.

Although she teaches elementary vocal music, Walworth believes in incorporating singing, dancing and playing in her instructions. She uses the Orffschulwerk approach, named after a German named Orff.

Walworth believes that students learn through play.

“How do you prepare them for instrumental music and drama in high school if you don’t provide some of that now?” she asked.

She wants to expand children into full musicians, the whole child, one who explores all areas and expands creativity.

Incorporating movement and instruments will become evident in the Christmas program this year, she said, a change from the past.

The elementary music room reflects that change. The kindergarten through third grades spend most of their time on the floor, with chairs stacked against the walls, “because they move around quite a bit.”

The older grades do sit in chairs sometimes, unless Walworth has them dancing to the music. The room is full after school of students practicing, most recently for the Christmas programs. “Sometimes they just play because it’s hard to do during the class,” she said. They are also improvising and composing.

As a first-year teacher at CCS, Walworth said it’s been a big change for both her and the students. She took over from long-time teacher Dr. J. Gordon Christensen.

However, the first few months have been great. “It’s a dream job,” Walworth enthused. She said she’s had wonderful support from the Pom Poms and the community.

“I feel welcomed, and the kids are great!” she said.

Walworth taught at Sumner-Eddyville-Miller from 2006-09 before accepting the Imperial job. If there’s one more thing Walworth wants to do this year, it’s to organize an “Orff” ensemble after school for those students interested in an extra challenge. “It would be more one on one with me, and it could potentially be a program.”

Walworth said she’s had so many people asking her to give private piano or guitar lessons. While she doesn’t have the time, she hopes that when husband Michael graduates from the University of Nebraska-Kearney next spring with a degree in music composition, that he’ll be able to take those students.

“Life is 24-hours a day planning and teaching,” she observed. “I enjoy every minute of it, but it’s a tough job.”