

Tulare County Office of Education

Jim Vidak, County Superintendent of Schools

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Media Advisory

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Tulare County Office of Education Announces:

University Preparatory Handbell Choir prepares for May 19 concert

High school acquires five-octave set of bells to share unique musical art form with broader audience

The University Preparatory Handbell Choir and music instructor Patty Guthrie are celebrating the acquisition of a five-octave set of handbells of their own. According to Mrs. Guthrie, handbell choirs are relatively popular performance groups in east coast and faith-based high schools. “I am not familiar with any schools in this area that play these special instruments,” said Mrs. Guthrie. “We look forward to sharing this beautiful and unique musical experience with Tulare County audiences.” University Preparatory High School (UPHS) is the Tulare County Office of Education’s public charter school located on the Visalia campus of College of the Sequoias.

The 30-member handbell choir is currently rehearsing for the UPHS Spring Showcase, planned for Thursday, May 19 beginning at 6:00 p.m. in the COS Theater. The handbell choir will perform along with the UPHS choir, dance and guitar classes. The UPHS Spring Showcase is a free event, open to the public.

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For several years, Mrs. Guthrie has taught a handbell class, using bells borrowed from two local churches. In the past six months, the school managed to raise nearly \$13,000 toward the purchase of its own set. Tulare County Superintendent of Schools Jim Vidak and county trustees kicked off the campaign at the November Tulare County Board of Education meeting with a donation of \$5,000. Over the holidays, Gateway Church in Visalia allowed the choir to play at their Christmas programs and to receive donations, which they matched up to \$1,000. Mrs. Guthrie reports that the school received nearly \$4,000 from those Christmas performances and \$1,000 from the Visalia Downtown Rotary, plus donations from music educators, UPHS faculty members and citizens who support the arts.

During the fundraising, Mrs. Guthrie found a man willing to sell his used four-octave set, which will be reconditioned by the original manufacturer this summer. A fifth-octave set was purchased new and arrived at the school last week for students to use in the UPHS Showcase on May 19.

For more information on the UPHS Spring Showcase or the school's music program, call Patty Guthrie at (559) 730-2529.

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