

HeartStrings SoundPost

HeartStrings Studio ♥ River Falls Academy, Suite 212 ♥ 439 West Maple Street ♥ River Falls, WI 54022 ♥ (715)425-0170
www.heartstringsviolinstudio.com January 2010

Parent Board Fundraisers

There are only six first edition HeartStrings t-shirts remaining:

1 Adult Small, 1 Adult Large, and 4 Youth Medium. (\$20)

There are also six DVDs from our November concert. (Suggested donation \$10-15)

The DVD's are on the green table in room 212. Let Joan know if you'd like a t-shirt.

Solo Recitals – Sunday, February 7th

Note: Yes, we do realize this is Superbowl Sunday, an unfortunate coincidence. We hope that you will support your young soloist before the game EVEN if the Vikings make it to the Superbowl this year. (Our condolences to all Packer fans.)

Where: Unitarian Universalist Church, N8019 Highway 65, (Just south of River Falls)

When: 1:00 and 3:00. There will be a sign-up sheet in room 212 on the green table.

Rehearsals: Students will have the opportunity to rehearse their solo with the pianist during their group class the week of January 25 and February 1.

Dress: Something nice, not necessarily concert black.

No reception – please plan a special treat for your soloist!

What's Worked for Me

–Becky St. John-Woodhull

We were so blessed to find HeartStrings 2 ½ years ago. My son had taken lessons a traditional-note-reading-way in a town we had moved from, and now we were looking for a new violin teacher. I had heard of the Suzuki method, but really knew nothing about it, except that kids learned to play by ear. What initially drew me to Heartstrings was pretty much the group lessons in addition to the 30-minute individual lesson a week. If 30 minutes a week is good, 90 minutes a week is excellent, right?

I planned to drop off my son for his lessons and pick him up 30 minutes later, like we did with our previous teacher. I knew no different, as when I took flute lessons in school, my parents were not involved at all with my lessons or practice.

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Ask Anything

Q. How can I get my child to look at his violin while practicing? Our teacher frequently works on this in lessons, but we still struggle with being able to do it consistently.

A. Teachers differ in opinions about this, but I like my students to develop the habit of watching the bow where it contacts the string. This is where the all action is! The bow is responsible for making the sound, for articulation, for playing soft or loud, for playing rhythms, etc. I also believe this is an excellent way to develop focus or concentration. If a student is having trouble with this we need to help them by giving them a reason to watch the bow. I usually ask a specific question about their bow. For example: “Did your bow stay on the highway for the whole piece?” or “Did your bow have a tilt the entire time you were playing?” For non bow-watchers, they usually guess or admit they don’t know. Then I ask them to play the same thing again and I warn them that I will ask the same question when they are finished. When they can answer “yes,” I ask them “how do you know?” Eventually the student makes the connection between watching the bow and keeping it on the highway or keeping it tilted, or whatever skill they are developing. Keep in mind, too, that it takes 21 days to develop a new habit. (Thanks to Ed Sprunger and Oprah.)

Q. Why is HeartStrings policy so strict about makeup lessons?

A. The policy is that if the teacher misses a lesson, the lesson will definitely be made-up or the tuition refunded. If a family misses a lesson the lesson will probably not be made-up. This policy is pretty standard among all teachers who teach more than 20 students per week. HeartStrings adopted it because we felt that if a teacher reserves a special

time each week to work with a family, the lesson time should be considered a special time by the family, too. We find that nearly all of our families are GREAT about prioritizing their lesson time in their schedules and have very few missed lessons. When a family knows ahead of time that they will be missing a lesson we often try to arrange a time-swap with another family. When children or other family members are sick, sometimes a lesson is missed. If teachers were to make an effort to makeup these lessons, we would probably be adding an entire week or two to our schedule in the summer when we could be teaching for much-needed summer income.

If you have any questions you'd like to see answered in the next issue, email them to joan@heartstringsviolinstudio.com.



Getting to Know Other Parents in Group Class

Some of the parents have mentioned that they don't know the other parents at group class. We think it is important that parents get to know one another because of the wealth of knowledge that you share collectively. Joan made a list of names by group class and slipped it into your mail file at the studio. See if you can introduce yourself to at least two parents whom you haven't met at upcoming group classes. Yes, we know this will be difficult since we won't let you talk during class(!) please try to work it in before we begin or afterwards. The group class teachers might create some activities to help with this.

Caring for your



Violin in Winter Weather

Please take good care of your instruments in winter. When transporting your instrument in a car take it inside with you rather than leave it the cold even for 15 or 20 minutes. Changes in temperature affect many things and lead to expensive repair bills: the strings will pop out of tune, seams can open, and the wood can actually crack in very cold weather.

Parent Board News

The HeartStrings Parent Association Board members are in the process of proofreading and finishing up a letter to our membership.

You will find a copy of this letter soon in your mail file and in your email. Please take time to read it carefully as it concerns each of you regarding volunteer hours vs. buying out your volunteer hours.



Community Events

FIDDLER ON THE ROOF
Presented by River Falls Community Theater in partnership with River Falls High School, directed by Peter Bloch. Joan is the fiddler!
Performances: February 25 - 28, March 4 - 7, 2010 at River Falls High School.

HeartStrings Events



- January 31** SAM Graduation Recordings due
- February 7** Solo Recitals (see page 1)
- Feb. 14 – 19** Studio Closed. Wendy, Ed and Joan will be attending a Teacher Development Workshop in Nashville.
- March 27** 1:00 rehearsal/2:30 SAM Violin Graduation Recitals at Orchestra Hall in Minneapolis (*Violas will be earlier than this, we haven't been given a specific time, yet*)
- March 15-20** Spring Break – no lessons or group classes
- April 25** HeartStrings Group Concert, time and venue TBD

What's Worked for Me, cont'd from pg. 1

Lessons with HeartStrings was a lot more of a commitment on my part than I originally thought, but am I ever glad we made the change. My 11-year-old son started playing “real” music from the start, instead of the endless “one-or-two-note-songs” in his note reading book with his previous teacher. We were encouraged to listen to music and to work and practice together. The positive effect this has had on our whole family is evident, as we are all becoming lovers of excellent music. It has definitely given my son and me a closer, deeper friendship. “Priceless.”

This isn't to say that we never have our struggles with practicing. Like anybody else, we have our ups and downs. We have found that being accountable to our teacher with his minutes of practice has helped immensely. This way, my son isn't accountable to only me, but to his teacher as well. When I was in school I took flute lessons for four years before quitting, ☹ so I dusted my flute off, and we occasionally will play together for elderly, family, or church. On Christmas Eve last month, we played together at Shopko for raising money for Salvation Army. Doing small things like this has helped keep practicing fun and purposeful.

Do you have some ideas for practicing that you can share in the next newsletter? Has HeartStrings touched your life too? Please email Becky at bjoy.stw@gmail.com. (Students' comments encouraged, too!)

On the Lighter Side...

While attending the symphony one evening, Henry was dismayed to find that several neighboring seats were occupied by incessant talkers.

Finally, exasperated, he turned to address the inconsiderate group: "Those people on the stage," he drily declared, "are making such a noise I can't hear a word you're saying!"

In the Next Issue

We are hoping to make some additions in the upcoming issues of HeartStrings SoundPost, but will need your help.

Some ideas are: Classified ads for musical related items for sale or to give away, student highlights or accomplishments, as well as tips you can offer for the "What's Worked for Me" column or recommended resources.

Please contact Joan at joan@heartstringsviolinstudio.com or Becky at bjoy.stw@gmail.com with your ideas.



HEARTSTRINGS
STUDIO

Recommended Websites

If you have any websites or other resources you would like to recommend for the next issue of HeartStrings SoundPost, please email Becky at bjoy.stw@gmail.com



Suzuki Association of the Americas Web-Site:

<http://suzukiassociation.org>

If you have not yet visited the SAA website, I would recommend taking the time to do so! There are many things of interest to both parents and teachers. All of our HeartStrings instructors are members of this association. Parents are encouraged to become members as well. An "Associate Membership" for parents, families, retired Suzuki teachers and others costs \$35/year. Benefits include a one-year subscription to the *American Suzuki Journal*. Visit <http://suzukiassociation.org/about/membership/> or call the SAA at 1-888-378-9854 for more information.



"Making Use of the Lesson" - Edmund Sprunger, Teacher Trainer and author of [Helping Parents Practice](#)

An Audio Recording from the 2008 Suzuki Conference in Minneapolis can be found at:

<http://suzukiassociation.org/news/3466/>

Making Use of the Lesson gives ideas for using children's lessons and practice times (i.e. home lessons) to accomplish our biggest job: to become useless. We accomplish this task through helping students develop a variety of skills, especially the skills to teach themselves. If you weren't able to make it to the SAA conference in '08, this website has made the session available online. You can listen to the recording right from the website, or download the files to listen to later.



"Supporting Your Teacher" - Diane Schroeder with Brad and Nancy Langguth

Another audio recording found at:

<http://suzukiassociation.org/news/3466/>

You appreciate your teacher.... What can you do for him/her that will make a difference? Learn and share in this session meant for parents who want to support their program and their child's teacher.



Tuning Your Instrument

Here is a very cool website that gives the pitches to help with tuning any instrument!

http://www.get-tuned.com/violin_tuner.php