



CREATIVITY – CONFIDENCE – TEAMWORK

We build harmony in low-income communities by uniquely inspiring and engaging children, young people and their families through sustainable evidence-based music programs that combine creativity, confidence building and teamwork. Harmony Project of America guides civic institutions, school systems, community organizations, musicians and policy makers to collaboratively build community-based Harmony Project consortiums for which full scholarships are offered. We provide technical assistance, facilitator and operations training, consulting and access to our growing national network.

Our Philosophy

At Harmony, all children are precious. No child’s potential to succeed should depend exclusively on where they are born and grow up. Failing to address the challenges of low-income communities such as alienation, distrust, poverty and crime, thwarts each child’s potential to thrive. The stability and positive relationships forged within Harmony Project enable our students to develop the healthy resilience they need to overcome the seemingly insurmountable challenges they face on a daily basis.

“Music gave me a life I never imagined I would have, and it made me realize that where I came from had nothing to do with where I can go. The day I performed with the LA Philharmonic was the day that I decided that I no longer needed to prove anything, I would just let my actions speak for themselves. I proved that it doesn’t matter that English wasn’t my first language, or that my parents did not go to college – it is all about what I have made myself into.”

At Harmony, each child matters. Our primary goal is to optimize each child’s potential through ongoing mentoring, support and the progressive building of personal responsibility and respect for others. With full appreciation that each person’s trajectory is unique, our student-centric approach embraces each child with compassion, support and mentoring throughout childhood. Through active participation in music making and creative musical expression, each child is progressively energized by a sense of confidence built through a collaborative process that transcends perceived boundaries.

“In my adolescent years, I made a lot of mistakes, becoming friends with rowdy misguided students rather than focusing on my school work,

ditching classes just to fit in, and getting bad grades to prove that I was one of them. Soon after I was accepted into a group of pursuers who cared about their future just as much as music. Music and my friends started to become my priority and my school work started to improve dramatically. Music has allowed me to express myself through the melody – my melody... Harmony Project is my life, heart, love and family.”

At Harmony, each child is valued. Each child also learns to value who they are by engaging in a collaborative musical learning environment that fosters tolerance, patience, empathy and mutual support. We are convinced that *gangs* lure and destroy vulnerable children by capitalizing on the painful void and need within each child to belong. Harmony Project fills that void, and expands that space by enabling children to learn from one another in a healthy manner. Our Harmony *ensemble* is a metaphor for a *healthy community* – each citizen in their own unique way contributes to the greater good. In a similar manner, Harmony Project, from an operational perspective, unites communities with a collaborative focus on challenging, engaging and preserving their most valuable resources – children.

“Coming from the inner city, there are many stereotypes I had to beat, the most common being teen pregnancy, high drop out rates, drug use and gangs. As a young child, I vowed not to fall into these stereotypes. Some of the things I have done to move away from them is volunteering at the California Hospital Medical Center in their Pediatrics department. There I am able to tend to patients and their needs, play with younger patients, and sometimes read to those who wish to hear a story. The most valuable volunteer experience I have taken a part in is mentoring two younger kids who belong to the Harmony Project. Over the course of my mentoring experience, I have really gotten to know my two students on a personal basis and I’ve learned a lot about their backgrounds and their personalities. I’ve taken the time to learn about them because in order to create great leaders, you must create great bonds. Mentoring has allowed me to become a more responsible individual, and this translates into my school work, resulting in me wanting to go into the medical field and possibly become part of Doctors Without Borders.”

At Harmony, we are a family. Each child is welcomed, accepted and embraced in a safe enriching environment. Each element of personal expression and disclosure opens doors for those who endure an otherwise threatening and dangerous environment where mere survival takes precedence over even a glimpse of realizing one’s full potential. As we set the stage for building cross-cultural tolerance and respect for each person’s unique gifts, every child is embraced and strengthened within a true family environment. Collective support becomes the catalyst for striving together for a higher purpose.

“Batman once said, ‘I made a promise on the grave of my parents that I would rid this city of the evil that took their lives.’ As ridiculous as it

might seem, Harmony Project is Batman, and in its own way, fulfills that promise (metaphorically of course). Harmony Project is fighting crime one child at a time! At Harmony Project, it's not just about the wonderful gift of music, it's about everyone as an individual, family and community. Consider this: teen moms, high school dropouts, failures and dependents on the system. A typical Latino, right? At Harmony Project that isn't the case. Here they are actually willing to reverse the stereotypes placed on underprivileged children like me. There is no prejudice or discrimination. Neither the color of your skin nor your background impact the treatment or quality of instruction you receive. In that sense, Harmony Project is like a family."

At Harmony, culture matters. Hard work, discipline, dedication and an ongoing commitment promote self-confidence and drive success at every level. Our culture of facilitating and mentoring as opposed to just teaching (or conveying information), distinguishes Harmony staff as true role models who inspire students to tap into their greatest potential and realize their dreams. Through creative musical expression and teamwork, each child advances beyond both real and perceived obstacles in a manner that fosters a positive outlook and an empowering sense of hope in a unique culture of success.

"Like the disdain I felt for my instrument in the beginning, I felt the same contempt for school. I entered high school with the mentality that it was merely an element in my life that prevented me from being free. This reflected in my grades where I received mostly Ds and Cs. I tried my best to minimize my time in school and maximize my time away from it. However due to the persistence of my family, community, school and Harmony Project, they forced me to realize the greatness in the quest for learning and self discovery. I soon understood the relation between music, school, and every other aspect of my life, and began to apply the same lessons and techniques I learned in music lessons to these areas of my life. I reformed as a student, pushing myself to achieve a 3.7 GPA for tenth grade, then a 3.9 GPA and eventually I earned a perfect 4.0 for the first time in my life. Harmony Project has shaped me and shown me the path to success through sheer perseverance."

At Harmony, the future matters. While many children including those from advantaged backgrounds drop out of traditional music lessons within the first few years, most Harmony students stay with us as they evolve from childhood through their teenage years. This isn't surprising since our vision extends far beyond music. We strive to help our students develop an invaluable sense of vision and direction for future success. While some of our graduates not surprisingly become professional musicians or music educators, most enter other fields. More than one third pursue STEM careers. To date, we have two Fulbright Scholars and one doctor among our alumni.

"My family immigrated to the United States with our hearts full of hope

and dreams for the future. You can imagine my family's dismay when we were fleeced by my grandmother's brother, and lost all of our possessions. My grandmother had to return to Korea and my parents considered leaving us to be adopted by another family. And yet the Harmony Project brought a glimmer of hope to our family through the gift of music. Although I witnessed my family's adversities, Harmony Project shaped me into the happy, confident individual I am today. Harmony Project turned my world into a joyful place, and it replaced my cynicism with optimism that gave me strength in my academic endeavors. Music is our haven amongst our adversities, and this empathy, along with our respect for others as musicians, allowed us to transcend the boundaries of racism and form true friendships amongst us. Harmony Project has brought light into our lives, our families and hence, our community."

At Harmony, becoming more effective matters. The stakes are high – we support many children, families and communities – and we take our responsibility seriously. Harmony Project's unrelenting quest requires us to continuously evolve – to better understand what works, and what must be refined to best serve those who place their trust in us. We believe that research is key to learning from the past and building a better tomorrow. We are pleased to note that research has demonstrated that children who participate in Harmony Project become better listeners, which improves their reading skills as well as their ability to focus in a noisy classroom. According to lead researcher, Nina Kraus, Ph.D. - Auditory Neuroscience Laboratory at Northwestern University, "music may play a crucial role in closing the academic achievement gap between affluent and low-income children."

"The challenge of enabling each child to flourish in what can only be described as an extraordinarily harsh low income environment must not be underestimated. Underprivileged children are especially vulnerable, as evidenced by a plethora of distressing statistics that directly link crime, poverty and behavioral health disorders in these neighborhoods. While we realize that children who grow up in dangerous environments are severely disadvantaged, relatively few effective solutions exist to counter the obstacles they face.

"Harmony Project is the antidote for this challenge that has progressively evolved into one of the most devastating ills our society faces. Margaret Martin is more than a true visionary – she is the energy, wisdom and spirit behind a brilliant movement that actually works. As evidenced by the student quotes above, this unique program creates the opportunity to make music collectively as a launching pad for healthier children, families and communities.

"In accordance with our peer-reviewed published music research focusing on at-risk inner city youth, I am absolutely convinced that the Harmony Project precisely meets our criteria for success – it is accessible, affordable

and sustainable – a spark of hope in an era when hope seems to have been lost. We are pleased and honored to provide research and program support for the Harmony Project.” – Barry Bittman, MD, Neurologist, CEO – Yamaha Music and Wellness Institute, Senior Vice President, Chief Population Health Officer – Allegheny Health Network.