



VanderCook
COLLEGE OF MUSIC

ANNUAL
REPORT 2011



Dr. Charles T. Menghini

College President

There is something special about VanderCook College of Music. It's not tangible. It's not something that you can measure. Despite these days of standardized tests and accountability...that is, boiling everything down to a number and determining the probability...one thing is certain: the spirit of VanderCook College of Music is getting stronger every day. What is that spirit? Well, in our promotional materials we call it "passion." Share your Passion!

My former music professor and dear friend, Tim Lautzenheiser, routinely says in his talks to music educators, "You're only worth what you give away." Sharing your passion is "giving it away."

This year's annual report is dedicated to some special people who give it away. Inside these pages you will read about people who give of their time, talents, and treasure. All of the people highlighted in these stories (and there are so many more) help make VanderCook College of Music a special institution with a special purpose...enriching lives through the power of music education.

Each of us has so much to give, and every time something in my life isn't the way I want it to be, I realize that I need to do something for someone. I need to give something away. It can be as simple as a good morning hello or a smile, or it can be offering to help someone in the form of a service project. It can

be giving a little extra effort in a rehearsal or a few more dollars to a special cause. It doesn't matter what it is. What matters is that I do something. And every time I do, I feel good because I know that I can make a difference. So can you.

This year, I am asking you once again to support the efforts of this great college. I am asking you to support the people who make it possible for VanderCook College of Music to realize its mission now and for

years to come. I am asking you to support VanderCook College of Music by helping us provide our students with the facilities and resources necessary to continue our growth and to expand the influence of this great college and the positive impact music and music education has on all of our lives. If you've done it before, I'm asking you to do it again. And if you have yet to support VanderCook, I am asking you to do it now! We have big plans and we

will not be able to do it alone. We need you to "Share Your Passion" with us.

As you flip through these pages, I hope that you will take time to not only enjoy the photos, but also to read the stories. These stories are about people who "give it away." They epitomize the old saying, "worth their weight in gold." These folks are but a sampling of the great people who make VanderCook a magical, musical place. I hope that this year you will join them!

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The mission of VanderCook College of Music is to enrich the lives of present and future generations through the preparation of teachers in instrumental, choral, and general music disciplines. Our broad-based curriculum is designed to prepare teachers with strong character, skill in the process of teaching, and respect for the essential role of music in our culture.

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VanderCook:

A Year in the Life

Life at VanderCook College of Music is more than just total immersion in music. Like a bustling beehive, the college engages the passionate, talented, and dedicated with a non-stop calendar of instruction, events, and performances, both in the classrooms and behind the scenes. Here's a look at just some of the major events in a typical year at VanderCook...

AUGUST

The academic year kicks off with 7 Steps to a Better Band, a two-day workshop designed to help high school students sharpen their leadership and communication skills for the fall marching band season. Fall Semester begins shortly afterwards, as new and returning students attend a Welcome BBQ and Orientation. A number of seniors begin Fall Student Teaching, a 15-week internship providing their first hands-on classroom teaching experiences in elementary, middle, and high schools.

SEPTEMBER

September sees Middle Level HonorFest, an all-day clinic for director-nominated advanced band and choir middle school students. The Prism Concert, the signature fall event, features performances showcasing students' newly acquired skills on secondary instruments. VanderCook also hosts Senior Day, the first of several visitation days held throughout the year for high school students and their parents.

OCTOBER

The highly anticipated Fall MECA Classes open October with a bang, offering continuing education courses for working teachers with subjects including rehearsal techniques, instrument repair, and classroom technology. VanderCook students round out their studies with the Fall Tour, two days of performances at several high schools in the greater Chicago area; the



Large Ensemble Concert; and a pep band performance for Chicago Marathon runners at mile 23. Senior Recitals pepper the month, featuring works by noted classical and contemporary composers. Behind the scenes, the college's Annual Fiscal Audit is conducted, and the first quarterly Board of Trustees Meeting is held as well. More Visitation Days are held this month, and several faculty members offer clinics at the annual Wisconsin Music Educators Association conference.

NOVEMBER

The season of giving starts early at VanderCook, as the "Share Your Passion" Annual Campaign begins its first round, soliciting donations to support the college's day-to-day operations. Mid-month activities include Advisement for Spring Term, another Visitation Day, and the Medium Ensemble Concert. Dozens of woodwind method students hone their teaching skills at Toot 'N' Doodle, an outreach event introducing 2nd and 3rd grade children to musical instruments, offered in conjunction with the Northwest Indiana Symphony Orchestra. Percussionists from all grade levels attend the Percussive Arts Society International Convention, the largest percussion event in the world featuring over 120 concerts, clinics, master classes, labs, workshops, panels and presentations. Over 200 young guitarists descend on the college for the annual Day of Guitar, an all-day event featuring clinics, rehearsals, solo and ensemble performances, and a full-scale "guitar orchestra" concert. But what all VanderCook students look forward to the most this month is seeing their instructors and mentors cut loose at the Faculty and Staff Recital, followed by a catered Thanksgiving Dinner served by faculty, staff, and alumni board members.

DECEMBER

The concluding month of the fall semester brings Final Exams and Jury Examinations for all students, as well as the holiday Choral and Orchestra Concert. Choral students volunteer to perform for the annual Holiday Food Drive co-sponsored by ABC7 Chicago and Dominick's Food Stores, televised live by ABC7. The capstone event of the season is the VanderCook Symphonic Band performance at the Midwest Clinic, an annual gathering of over 11,000 musicians, band and orchestra directors, music students, and vendors from around the world. With a second Board of Trustees Meeting concluded, as well as the Annual Alumni Association Meeting and Reception, a well-earned holiday break is enjoyed by all!

JANUARY

Spring semester opens with the start of Professional Education Classes, a six-week series of upper-level courses focusing on educational philosophy, learning styles and strategies, and classroom skills. The Student Teacher Retreat prepares those students entering the final phase of the degree program, introducing them to their cooperating teachers at participating host schools. Performance Competency Examinations are also held, testing proficiency on all instruments. VanderCook also welcomes top musicians from Chicagoland's Catholic high schools for rehearsals and performances during the All-Catholic Honor Band annual event. State Music



Educator Association conferences held in Michigan, Indiana, Missouri, and Georgia host select VanderCook faculty as clinicians, and provide excellent opportunities to recruit future students. Of particular note, however, is the Illinois Music Educators Association conference, at which VanderCook ensembles perform reading sessions throughout the event.

FEBRUARY

The starting gun for Spring MECA Classes and Spring Student Teaching is heard throughout the school, and VanderCook's halls play host again to Visitation Days for prospective students. Day of Percussion welcomes percussionists from across the Midwest for workshops with guest clinicians and VanderCook faculty, and performances by local ensembles and the VanderCook Percussion Ensemble. February also sees Junior Recitals, another element unique to VanderCook's curriculum. Faculty members who attend the Music Educator Association conferences in Ohio, Minnesota, and Texas return to enjoy the Chamber Ensemble Concert, the first student performance to usher in the spring concert series.

MARCH

"March Madness" means only two things at VanderCook: Midterms and more music! The Large Ensemble Concert is an annual crowd pleaser that rings in the month on a high note. The all-day BandFest and ChoralFest offers non-competitive performance opportunities for middle and high school students as well as specialized clinics for directors and their ensembles. Student teachers and their cooperating teachers from the entire year gather for recognition and networking at the Student Teacher Reception. More Visitation Days and the spring Board of Trustees Meeting are followed by the much-needed breather of Mid-Semester Break.

APRIL

A veritable shower of events hits the calendar this month, with no less than four concerts presenting the full spectrum of VanderCook's performing talents: the spring Medium Ensemble and Chamber Ensemble Concerts, the Side By Side Orchestra Concert, and the perennial favorite Student Conductor Concert. But the most talked-about event of the month is A Night at the Pops, a benefit concert in support of the Great Teachers Scholarship Fund. Alumni, parents, and friends of the college gather for a lavish, fun-filled evening of student performances, food, drinks, and unique auction items. Jury Examinations are sprinkled throughout the month, which also sees Junior Day for visiting high school juniors, and Advisement for Fall Term. Middle





and high school ensembles of the highest performance levels visit for clinics and evaluations during VanderCook's BandFest and OrchestraFest.

MAY

Spring semester finally winds to a close with the conclusion of Student Teaching and Final Exams. The day-long Cellobration invites cellists of all ages to participate in rehearsals and master classes with world-class clinicians. Undergraduate Commencement marks the end of years of hard work and devotion for graduating students, now ready to begin the most important chapter in their lives: entering the world as professional music teachers for the musicians of tomorrow. VanderCook also confers an Honorary Doctorate during the commencement ceremony.

JUNE

While summer usually offers a rest period for most of the education world, things are no less busy at VanderCook than at any other time during the year. Summer Graduate Semester and Summer MECA Classes take off right out of the gate, as the college is swarmed with over 400 students and teachers from across the country. A Graduate Welcome Party breaks the ice for those attending these intensive six-week sessions. A special Undergraduate Orientation is held for the upcoming fall's incoming students, complemented by a staff-hosted Welcome Breakfast for new students and parents. As part of the master's degree program, all graduate students are required to present a

scholarly research project to their classmates in one of two formats: Lecture/Recitals, where extensive history and context accompanies a performance, or Lecture/Demonstrations, presenting special subject matter in a teaching-oriented atmosphere. Alumni events are developed and planned at the Summer Alumni Board Meeting, including the Distinguished Alumni Award and next year's Alumni Reception. But the month is not all work: friends, faculty, and alumni converge on the Links at Carillon Golf Course in Plainfield, IL, for the annual TrusTEE Golf Open. This fun-filled event benefitting the Great Teachers Scholarship Fund features 18 holes of championship golf, delicious dining, and a wealth of raffle items. The first Graduate Concert of the summer allows master's degree students the chance to let off some musical steam in the midst of their residency.

JULY

A number of activities and benchmarks are funneled into the final month of the academic year. A second Graduate Concert is coupled with the Graduate Class Fundraiser, an exciting night of performances and contests sponsoring the graduating class' gift to the college (which is matched dollar for dollar by the Alumni Association). The Graduate Band teams up with the VanderCook Drum Circle for a Concert in the Park at the Clarke House Museum in Chicago, presented by Lakeside Bank to benefit the Parkways Foundation. Years of preparation culminate in students' Professional Teaching Portfolios, which are reviewed this month to assess the understanding of professional teaching standards, and their application to teaching and learning. As classes and Written Comprehensive Exams wind to a close, the final focus is on the Master's Projects Poster Session, where graduate students' research projects are displayed on poster boards and presented to the public. For those who only warmed up at June's TrusTEE Golf Open, the Quinlan & Fabish Maury Rhodes Classic offers another day of golf in the sun, benefitting the Maurice Rhodes Band Library Fund at VanderCook. Graduate Commencement at the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's main hall is filled with exemplary performances and overwhelming pride as master's degrees and an Honorary Doctorate are conferred. With the final Board of Trustees Meeting, another year comes to a close, allowing little time before the calendar "resets" and the cycle of passionate students and music education begins again.





Living a Life of Music:

Patrick Benson

Tucked behind Marina Towers on the Chicago River, House of Blues is a popular Near North Side music venue renowned for hosting local musical talent and some of the best touring acts from across the country. Concert acts include original musicians, tribute bands, and jazz performers as well as some of the biggest

names in music: Jimmy Buffett, Pearl Jam, Jurassic 5, The Who, and Al Green. But on a Saturday night in June, a packed house waited for Ben Ripani Music Co. to take the stage. A featured act at the Halfway to Chicago Bluegrass & Blues Fest, Ben Ripani

was also celebrating the release of their first album. As the band took the stage and knocked out a set that had the crowd calling for an encore, it's a good bet drummer Patrick Benson's double life was the farthest thing from their minds.

"I want to expose my students to as much of the world as possible. Not even just music, also what music can lead them to."

Teacher by day, rock star by night, Benson lives each day at a blinding, exhausting pace as he shares his love of music and performing. By day, Benson's audience is made up of his students at Hubbard High School in Chicago's West Lawn neighborhood. On the south side since 1929, Hubbard currently serves 1,800 students and offers Benson the perfect outlet for sharing his passion for music and for the world it opens up to his students. Benson's commitment to those students goes well beyond teaching scales and rhythms. "I want to expose my students to as much of the world as possible," he says, "Not even just music, also what music can lead them to."

Benson was first led to his passion for music by his parents. Although neither of them are musically inclined, their love of music filled Benson's childhood with a repertoire that included the Beatles, folk music, classical music, jazz, and a daily dose of Sousa. "My dad played Sousa marches in the mornings when I was in middle school and high school to wake me up," Benson recalls. He first tried his young hand at the

viola in kindergarten, but four years later he settled on percussion – for no particular reason -- and began his musical journey.

That journey included concert band and orchestral percussion lessons, drum set lessons in 6th grade, a community band at Notre Dame High School in Niles, IL, and numerous opportunities to play in any ensemble or group that was available. Benson's parents encouraged and supported their only child in all of his endeavors: sports, art, music, and Boy Scouts. "They were always there for me...like bumper rails in bowling...there but letting me take my own path," Benson says. They instilled in him the importance of taking part 100% in every endeavor and pursuit, and Benson is convinced that ethic has served him well. That includes helping him earn his Eagle Scout distinction as a freshman in high school and navigate the rigors of VanderCook's comprehensive curriculum.

By the time Benson enrolled at Notre Dame High School, the same school where he participated in community band, he was already considering a career in music. Private lessons, summers at Birch Creek Music Camp, playing in bands and groups, finding good friends along the way – all of it had Benson believing a career in music was in his future. It was his third band director, a VanderCook alumnus, who encouraged him to consider music education during his senior year at Notre Dame.

Mike Wallace (B99) recognized Benson's passion for playing and performing. Benson remembers Wallace asking him to think about how he wanted the rest of his life to look. Benson soon realized a life of performance would consist of playing, touring, teaching private lessons, and ultimately far less stability than he desired. He took Wallace's advice and added VanderCook to the list of Illinois colleges and universities he was checking out. After attending Senior Day, applying and auditioning, Benson was accepted. He also met professor Kevin Lepper, and took private percussion lessons the summer before he arrived on campus.

While Benson admits he was disappointed his other auditions were unsuccessful and the lure of a career in performance still nagged him, he found himself at VanderCook in fall 2004. Although he felt as if he'd been thrown into the water, he never second-guessed his decision or considered giving up. Looking back, Benson reflects on what kept him going. "First of all, I made a commitment. I knew I wanted to do something with music. I had strong relationships already with Kevin Lepper and Dr. Menghini. I wanted to prove I could do what I was being asked by people at VanderCook. I didn't want to let anyone down."

Benson soon learned the college catalog only told part of the story. Days beginning at 7 a.m. and going well into the evening made for a tough schedule. The demands were intense but Benson used a systematic approach, building skills at each level. "I took advantage of everything at VanderCook...every ensemble, any opportunity to play outside of the classroom, being in the fraternity, taking work study positions, bonding closely with so many classmates. I had thousands of things going on: classes, homework, practicing, friends, relationships, family. I had all these things to do...they just had to get done."

By spring 2008, Benson's self-described marathon – passing the Illinois State Board of Education's Basic Skills, Music Content-Area, and Assessment of Professional Teaching tests, completing techniques and methods classes, fulfilling general education requirements, performing two recitals, and student teaching – was over at last. He crossed the finish line with all of the practical and professional skills he needed





Above: the Ben Ripani Music Company is (r-l): Chris Nakielski (M09), Patrick Benson, Ben Ripani, Chris Lambert, and Dave Marshall (B12).

to begin his teaching career. Benson says he is convinced “VanderCook, just by its schedule and everything it offers, unconsciously prepares you for the everyday life of being a teacher.”

Benson began teaching at Hubbard in the fall of 2008. Since that time, he and his colleague, VanderCook alumnus David Stahlberg (M08), have seen the band program grow exponentially. Benson has found that teaching is the perfect outlet for sharing his love of music and performance. Whether his students are taking in a Chicago Symphony concert and dinner in a Chicago restaurant, touring a college campus after a band trip to Indianapolis, or sitting in with the VanderCook Marathon Pep Band at the 33rd Street Rally Station, Benson thrives on helping his students enjoy bigger and better lives through a relationship with music. Benson also appreciates the concrete rewards he gets from his students as he watches music transform them. “My purpose is to expose them to as much outside of their daily life as possible. Seeing their enjoyment, hearing them reflect on their experience, and knowing the vehicle for all of that is just being in band is my reward.”

In his other life, Benson has been the drummer with Ben Ripani Music Company for nearly two years. He’s played with one band member since high school and two others are friends from the VanderCook family. He describes their catalog as “Indie/folk/alternative/country/Americana, all originals.” They wrapped up their first East Coast tour last summer and look forward to going back out over winter break. The pace can be grueling, but he’s never too tired to rehearse. Benson acknowledges his VanderCook education even helps with the business aspect of the band, helping him be a “MacGyver” who can do just about everything from

creating PR pieces to handling AV projects.

And, Benson finds his two careers sustain each other. Rehearsing fuels his teaching, teaching fuels his playing. Kevin Lepper agrees. “One of our philosophies at VanderCook is that each student should learn to teach and perform up to their potential. These aren’t separate issues. They go hand in hand making the other stronger. Benson shows that he listened. He’s teaching music to his students at Hubbard during the day and performing professionally with Ben Ripani at night and on weekends.” For Benson, playing a drum set with “Ben” and taking the podium to conduct the Hubbard band both give him an irreplaceable rush. For his students, he hopes they continue to be excited playing for audiences and proud of their own personal musicianship.

And Benson knows VanderCook will always be part of his life. He feels indebted to the college and is loyally committed to its future success, serving his first term on the Alumni Association Board. He is certain alumni support – time, talent, or treasure – directly impacted his time at VanderCook, and he intends to do whatever he can to impact other students’ VanderCook experience. “Why would I not want to be an active alumni member?

My relationships here are so strong. I want to come back and help the people who helped me.”

Benson has no intention of slowing down. He acknowledges he has the best of both worlds and can think of nothing he’d rather do. That marathon he started in fall of 2004? He’s not really sure he’s ever stopped. “Playing, traveling, touring, recording, teaching my kids, taking my bands on band trips, doing whatever. If an idea comes to mind and there’s a route to make it happen – it happens.”



Born to Teach:

Ruth Rhodes

It's rare to be grateful for a job you didn't get, but if Ruth Rhodes had become the band director she wanted to be, life at VanderCook for the last 24 years, and the lives of its students during those years, would have been very, very different.

The year is 1969. Fresh from receiving her undergraduate degree from VanderCook, Valedictorian Ruth Rhodes had her sights set on teaching high school band. "I was told by the principals interviewing me that a woman should never be a band director. They couldn't see a woman out on the marching band field." So pervasive was this attitude – all her post-graduation interviews ended the same way – Rhodes drew inspiration from the person who had fuelled her musical enthusiasm during grade school: her clarinet teacher.

Rhodes first picked up the clarinet as a fifth grade band student in Hessville, IN – a district with a high level of expectation. "Everybody was in solo contests. Everybody. There were district contests, solo contests, small ensembles, and then the large ensemble contests later in the year – bands, orchestras, and choruses. And every year you were in solo contest." Naturally, private lessons were part of the regimen. "Everybody took private lessons. Parents thought it was important. If your child is going to select something, whether it's extracurricular or academic, then you supported it, and you made sure they were provided with all the best resources possible. It was just part of the culture."

Rhodes formed a special bond with her private clarinet teacher, VanderCook alumna Glenda Kolar



(née Benjamin, M65). “She took me under her wing,” Rhodes recalls. “She was a wonderful teacher and mentor, and took a real interest in our musical and personal well-being. I would come to VanderCook with her every Saturday to attend [graduate] classes just to sit in.” In time, Rhodes would even take additional lessons with Victor Zajec (B50, M64, HD90) while still in high school. When the time came for college, there was no doubt in her mind. “Going to VanderCook was really just a part of life in those days.”

With band director positions proving elusive after earning her bachelor’s degree, Rhodes earned her master’s degree at Chicago Musical College at Roosevelt University. She chose the school specifically to study with the man who taught her original clarinet teacher: Walter Wollwage of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. While earning her master’s, Rhodes took a teaching job at Oak Therapeutic School in Evanston. “I taught special needs students for four years. I really enjoyed learning how to work with the kids at their various levels of need.”

A part-time job at the educational Music Bureau, a Shawnee Press retail store in downtown Chicago, led to a fortuitous meeting with another VanderCook alumnus: her future husband Maurice (B64). Soon after they married, Rhodes stopped working altogether in order to raise a family. For the next 15 years, Rhodes taught clarinet privately in several high schools and colleges on Chicago’s south side. “I was a real master at fixing kids’ problems. I could take a kid who was terrible on clarinet and they’d become one of the best players after a year and a half, two years of studying with me, sometimes sooner. I could really get kids to blossom.”

In 1987, she added VanderCook to her roster, teaching the clarinet studio one day a week. That same year, her former professor Victor Zajec announced his retirement, and personally recommended Rhodes to take his place. She has called VanderCook “home” ever since, and was appointed dean of graduate studies in 1996.

For many VanderCook students, Rhodes not only drills them on the importance of teaching embouchure and fingerings, but also provides an invaluable link to the college’s past. Many of the names cemented in VanderCook’s history – H.E. Nutt, Victor Zajec, Merle Isaac, Haskell Harr, Forrest Buchtel – were all Rhodes’ professors during her undergraduate years.

**“In the back of my head, that was always my dream:
to teach at VanderCook. Always. Just because
I believe in the place. I really believe in the place.”**

“We had H.E. Nutt all four years. You could never get away from him. He was a very hard worker and spent a lot of time analyzing teaching situations, teaching methodologies, creating materials for us to learn with... He was a pretty amazing guy, and he was a very, very serious pedagogue.”

Nutt’s rigorous instruction methods left a distinctive mark in his conducting style. “There was never anything that he threw in front of you that you couldn’t get yourself out of, because of the techniques he taught. That’s what I remember the most. That and his attention to detail, and analyzing things down to its simplest forms, to get your point across to every kid in front of you. You know you can learn content anywhere. It’s really how to analyze it and put it to good use.”



If anyone could be credited with influencing Rhodes' teaching style, it surely was Zajec (Rhodes, in fact, was his very first college-level clarinet student). "He pushed. He acted rough and gruff, but only because he wanted the best out of you, and he wasn't going to baby you. 'Because you're going to grow up and you're going to learn to handle it,' that kind of attitude. I always referred to him as my second father." The similarities to Rhodes' own teaching style are not lost on her.

"I'm not going to water it down or pussyfoot around – I'm not going to treat anyone with kid gloves just because." Eventually, she recognized a parallel between teaching students and raising her own children. "I realized that you don't have to use intimidation to get your point across, that you can be stern and firm, and still convey disappointment." The importance of choices and their consequences remain hallmarks of her teaching style to this day.

It may surprise many who know Rhodes to learn that she never thought she was good enough to be a performer. "My whole persona was that I don't want to be in the limelight. It's just not me. I was too afraid of solo performance to play a recital. And yet I've performed

more after I graduated from VanderCook than most of the performance major friends I had." In spite of her early stage fright, Rhodes has played with the Northwest Indiana Symphony for over 30 years, and performed for several seasons with the Hinsdale Opera Theater, the Northside Symphony, and the Southwest Symphony. She has also performed with the Lyric Opera, and led her own chamber ensemble as part of the Dame Myra Hess Memorial Concert series broadcast on WFMT.

Still, Rhodes is as fervent about teaching as she ever was. "What I like best about teaching our students who are going to become band directors or music teachers is teaching them how to fix the problems. Because that's what you spend your whole day doing. VanderCook, H.E., and Vic Zajec – I really credit them with everything I learned, as far as how to teach." Having a career arc come full circle – returning to VanderCook, which featured so prominently in her musical beginnings – fits Rhodes like a glove.

"In the back of my head that was always my dream, to teach at VanderCook. Always. Just because I believe in the place. I really believe in the place."

Above: Rhodes works the crowd at Toot 'N' Doodle (see the outreach pages for details).



John Armstrong

Alumni Board President

As outgoing president of the VanderCook College of Music Alumni Association, it is my pleasure and privilege to write this letter to you. VanderCook enjoys the support of many alumni for a wide variety of efforts and endeavors. Currently the association has 228 active, dues-paying members. If you are not currently a member of the Alumni Association, please consider joining. Your alma mater needs your support now more than ever.

These are exciting times for VanderCook. If you have not been to campus recently, I encourage you to attend any of the multiple performances throughout the year. I am certain you will be pleased with the high quality of musicianship.

I am frequently asked in what ways VanderCook alumni can support the college. My answer is always, "Many!"

- Attend performances and events. VanderCook needs a stronger alumni presence at performances and events and you will not be disappointed!
- Keep your alumni dues current, spread the word, and get other alumni to join.
- Once you've joined, vote in the annual board election.
- Contribute to any or all of the college's fundraising campaigns: Share Your Passion, Great Teachers Scholarship, a favorite scholarship fund, or the Capital Campaign.

- Attend a fundraising event. Last year's A Night At The Pops was a phenomenal success and our annual golf outing gets bigger and better every year.
- Run for a seat on the Alumni Board. We have vacancies to fill every year.
- Attend the annual alumni reception at the Midwest Clinic.

**"Your alma mater needs
your support now
more than ever."**

The Alumni Association continues to sponsor the Distinguished Alumni Award, the Roseanne Rosenthal Excellence in Teaching Award, and the Alumni Scholarship – all thanks to your alumni dues. Last year, the Alumni Association contributed \$1,000 to the graduate class gift towards the renovation of the 3120 building. In short, your support is an

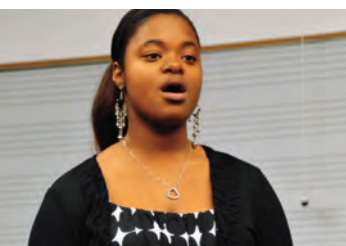
investment in all of our activities, in the future of the college, and in the future of music education.

Please accept my personal invitation to attend the annual reception and meeting of the Alumni Association, which will be held at the college on Friday, December 16 from 4:45 to 7:00 p.m. We look forward to seeing many of you, and hopefully some new faces as well!



Hard Work Pays Off:

The Meaders

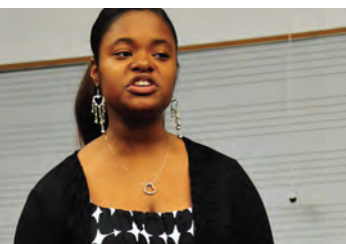


If you were to visit VanderCook on any given day, chances are you would run into a pint-sized student with a larger-than-life personality named DarLa Meaders. What you would not see is a supportive family intent on making sure their daughter realizes her dreams.

DarLa Meaders is the daughter of Darrin and Lisa Meaders, the big sister of DarLynn, and the little sister of Darrin II and DarLisa. A graduate of Morgan Park High School in Chicago, DarLa started her freshman year at VanderCook in 2010 and now finds herself looking to the end of her third semester at the college.



It's obvious that Darrin and Lisa are very proud of DarLa and what she's accomplished thus far, and they're involved in every part of that success. College faculty and staff aren't surprised to see her mother, Lisa, stopping by the school to attend a meeting with DarLa, and it would be uncommon to attend a concert and not see the Meaders family occupying part of a row of chairs towards the front of the room.



Says DarLa's mom, "As a child, DarLa was pretty much like she is now – very bubbly and determined. She always brought joy and laughter into a room with her

smiles and playfulness." But, with that playfulness comes determination. Tell DarLa she can't do something and she'll set out to prove you wrong.

"My family means a lot to me," says DarLa. "They support me and help me push through my good and bad days, especially my parents. Their support motivates me and gives me the drive and determination to show everything I've learned and can do."

The Meaders first noticed DarLa's musical talent when she joined the church choir at age five. They recall that when she sang her first solo, people were up on their feet clapping and singing along. The more they clapped and sang along, the more DarLa performed.

Elementary and middle school found DarLa active in choir practices, dance rehearsals, singing lessons, Girl Scouts, bowling, Double Dutch team, band, and dance and singing competitions. "DarLa didn't want to pass anything up, she wanted to do it all," says Lisa. When DarLa hit High School, she added Girls Chorus and the After School Matters Program to her list of activities.

A common question for parents with a musical child is, "Where do they get their musical abilities from?"



Darrin immediately replies that DarLa's natural talent is heaven-sent, but music also runs in the family. Both of DarLa's late grandfathers were musical – one gospel composer Charlie Meaders, the other jazz drummer Mitchell W. Boisseau, who played with Chicago's legendary Sun Ra in the late '50s. The Meaders family also recently learned that DarLa's grammar school music teacher, who took her under his wing from 3rd to 8th grade, attended VanderCook as well.

And that brings us back full circle to how DarLa is doing now, which can't be described much better than how her mother puts it: "When DarLa started at VanderCook, she was intimidated by the vigorous curriculum and long hours. At one point, she thought she couldn't handle it, but she did not give up and is succeeding. DarLa's confidence level has increased, and her skills and techniques have improved tremendously. She has become a very independent, responsible, mature young adult."

"My parents have sacrificed a lot to get me where I am today – both financially and by putting aside their own goals to help me with mine," DarLa says. "They tell me they're proud of me and encourage me to keep up the good work, but, more importantly, I can see

"When DarLa started at VanderCook, she was intimidated by the vigorous curriculum and long hours, but she did not give up and is succeeding. She has become a very independent, responsible, mature young adult."

– Lisa Meaders

it in their eyes."

When asked if they have any wisdom to share with other VanderCook parents, the Meaders responded, "Be active and supportive of your child's life and education. Ask your child questions about what's going on with them and at school. If possible, try to make it to the concerts because it's important that your child knows you have an interest in them and their education. Last, they need to know that hard work pays off!"

We couldn't agree more.

A Perfect Fit:

Matt Skrzypczynski



“Matt is an incredible young man. He is one of those rare young people in life who gives back ten times more than you give him.”

– Dr. Charles T. Menghini

“Friendly, people-oriented, and very active” are words that Mary Skrzypczynski uses to describe her son Matthew, a third-year student at VanderCook. The college’s faculty and staff feel the same way about the current president of VanderCook’s Xi Kappa Chapter of Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia. Matt is always quick to greet a visitor, provide a few words of encouragement to a friend, or pitch in and get his hands dirty when something needs to be done.

Matt is the youngest of three children of Richard and Mary Skrzypczynski (that’s ‘Skríp-sin-ski’ in case you were wondering), natives of Skokie, IL, a suburb located just north of Chicago. Given their close proximity to the college, it’s not uncommon to find yourself sitting next to them at concerts or annual fundraising events, and, like Matt, they’re quick to lend a hand when volunteers are needed.

When asked about Matt’s childhood, Mary recalls being amazed at his ability to build incredibly complex structures. This knack seems to have stayed with him. Like most college students looking to make ends meet, Matt works part-time, spending evenings and most weekends as a Specialist at the Apple Store in downtown Chicago. He’s passionate about his work there, but he’s equally, if not more, passionate about his music.

As early as elementary school, the Skrzypczynskis started receiving notes home that Matt was gifted in music. Always one to gravitate toward the low sounds, Matt grabbed the biggest recorder on the table to play in first grade and years later moved from clarinet to bass clarinet, then to contra bass clarinet.

“Practicing consistently was not one of Matt’s strengths, but whenever he had a specific goal with his music he practiced non-stop with amazing results,” says Mary. In middle school, Matt was mentored by his music teacher Vins Johnson, who nourished Matt’s talent and spirit. Looking ahead to high school, Matt found himself successfully competing at state music contests. Adds Mary, “Matt’s energy soared with every aspect of music and band, and his high school director, Elton Eisele (M97), mentored and instilled within him a desire to become a music educator himself.”

During Matt’s time at Niles North (one of the locations used in the film *Sixteen*



Candles), the school won the prestigious Kennedy Center for Performing Arts Award for the Best Fine Arts Program in the nation. As a result, Niles North was able to bring in composer Frank Ticheli to conduct a group of students. The experience made a deep and lasting impression on Matt. From that point on, the Skrzypczynskis claim it was obvious that music was going to be a part of every aspect of Matt's life.

Matt visited VanderCook during his sophomore year of high school and upon arriving home that day told his parents, "There's this music school that I really want to go to for college!" As he was only a sophomore, Richard and Mary didn't take him too seriously at that point, but Matt found himself back at VanderCook the following year, and his excitement continued to build. The Skrzypczynskis then decided they needed to check VanderCook out for themselves. Richard remembers being so taken with the college on that visit that Matt had to tell him, "Hey! Remember, this is where I'm going to school, not you!"

A professional photographer, Richard remembers the exceptional education and benefits of attending a single-focus school. "I immediately sensed that VanderCook would give Matt that same kind of exceptional college experience, and as a parent, I wanted him to have it from the my first visit at VanderCook."

Matt had no difficulty adjusting to life at VanderCook and the pressure that would force him to grow as a musician, educator, and person. Toward the end of his freshman year, his parents were surprised to hear him

say that while he was learning so much about music and teaching, he actually was also learning a sense of discipline and working to make it part of his every day life.

"Matt is an incredible young man," commented VanderCook president Dr. Charles Menghini. "He is one of those rare young people in life who gives back ten times more than you give him, and no student gives more to the college and to his fellow students. In addition to being an excellent student and earning a spot on the Dean's List every semester, he is a real leader in our college. I believe that every one of our students looks up to Matt as someone they respect and trust."

Everyone at the college believes that Matt is a perfect fit for VanderCook, and his parents feel the same way. "Along with the excellence in every aspect of music and education," Mary said, "you cannot find a better environment and faculty to mentor students into better musicians, educators and, most importantly, young adults."

Echoes Richard, "Every year that Matt is at VanderCook we absolutely believe that we could not have found a better school or fit for him as a talented musician. While it may sometimes add pressure to the students, no one is just a number at VanderCook. The support and encouragement of the faculty and staff is beyond 100%, and we believe that the opportunities and networking VanderCook provides will benefit students throughout their professional lives."



A Head for Business, an Ear for Music:

Grasso Graphics

When people receive a document in the mail from VanderCook, whether it's a MECA brochure or an annual report like this, they know that it's coming from people who take music and the impact of music education seriously. What might surprise them is that those documents are even printed by a family company that is just as serious about music, Grasso Graphics, Inc. "Music is a very important thing to our family, regardless of our business," says Bert Grasso.

The company was originally founded by Bert and his father, Salvatore Grasso, who was a career music teacher and band director for 32 years. Though it might seem like a strange leap for a band director to found a printing business, the music education profession was beginning to look like a less reliable career option in the late seventies, while Sal was directing the

band at Washington High School in Chicago.

"In 1979, the Chicago Board of Education went broke. I had two kids in college," says Sal. "So, we re-mortgaged our home and put together a Kwik Kopy Printing franchise."

Bert graduated from Northern Illinois University shortly after that, and the two founded the company together with Bert's mother, Patricia. Later, they were joined by Bert's brother, Mark, after he graduated from Columbia College in Chicago. The early days of the business were not easy, Bert recalls.

"Every customer was a victory. It wasn't easy, for sure. My father would teach, and my mother and I would run the shop. My mother would be inside, and I'd be out

on the street, trying to get a customer,” he says. “It was very exciting. I remember the first time we showed a profit, which was two and a half years into it.”

When the business was located on 79th St., in Chicago, the Grassos began doing more and more work for the Quinlan & Fabish Music Company, thanks to both the proximity of the two businesses and their relationships with the band community on the south side of Chicago. When VanderCook began looking for a new printer three years ago, George Quinlan Jr. recommended the south side printer. Since then, VanderCook has benefitted greatly from having a printer that shares its dedication to music and music education.

As the sons of a band director, it was a given that both Bert and Mark took instrumental lessons throughout their school career. Growing up, music was at the center of the family, even beyond their dad’s work. “Being in the band saved me,” says Bert, who remembers being incredibly homesick at the beginning of his freshman year of college before joining the Marching Husky Band. “I was the first to go to school, and I’m the oldest. I knew nobody! I made instant friends in the band. It was the reason for being there, as far as I was concerned. It kept me from hitting the road in the first week.” The next year, he would also meet his future wife in the band when she made the Huskies color guard and flag show.

Even though the printing business became successful, Sal continued teaching and finished out his career at Washington High School before retiring in 1991. He’s proud that, with the help of an active band booster organization, the marching band toured nationally, competed every year at the state marching band competition, and received a superior rating in the city contest for 20 years straight. “It wasn’t an average band. These kids performed, and they performed at a high level. The kids should be given the credit for that,” says Sal. He also credits the support of parents in the band boosters for making much of his band’s activities financially possible.

This lesson, that arts education needs to be financially supported to thrive, isn’t lost on any of the Grassos. “Every time there’s a political push-back to lower costs in schools, they always cut the arts. You’re going to cut off a beautiful endeavor at the knees and keep that from kids? It’s just wrong,” says Bert. “It’s very important to us that that doesn’t go by the wayside.”

Within a few short years, they have become regular attendees at the larger VanderCook events, and Grasso Graphics has stepped up to become an annual hole sponsor for the TrustEE Open golf outing, and an event sponsor for A Night at the Pops. This is a no-brainer, as far as they’re concerned: to keep music in schools, you need great teachers to share it with students.

Bert still remembers the first time he heard about VanderCook as a high school trumpet player. “My ex-band director was Marty Oberman (M73). He would talk about it as though it were Yale. He’d never let you forget two facts about him: that he was a marine, and that he graduated from VanderCook,” he recalls. “I don’t think you people appreciate how rare an animal you are.”

Looking forward, Bert’s optimistic about the institution’s future. “I tell you what,” he says. “I cannot wait until you guys get that new building built. You guys are busting at the seams. It’s the one thing about that place that simply must change. You deserve that facility. It can’t just be a dream. It’s key to the college’s survival, and – more than that – it’s key to the college’s thriving. I really do believe that it’s absolutely paramount.”

“Personal integrity is the most essential element for any teacher, particularly for a band director. You’re closer to the student than any other teacher in the school. A band director has to be a paragon above reproach.”

– Salvatore Grasso



Engineering a Career in Music Education:

Pete Frasso

Music officially became part of Pete Frasso's life in the 4th grade with piano lessons. Practicing was an unpleasant task encouraged and overseen by Frasso's mom. While Frasso complied - dutifully and somewhat reluctantly - through his sophomore year in high school, it might have been "twin envy" that really began Frasso's journey to music education.

"My twin brother joined the band in 6th grade and played saxophone. For some reason I didn't. He seemed to like it and I guess I felt left out," Frasso recalls now with no hint of sibling rivalry. An intuitive band director at Blanchard Middle School in Westford, MA, knew Frasso played piano; with a band minus a tuba player, he offered Frasso the opportunity to take up the large, funny sounding instrument. Frasso agreed and the rest, as they say, is history.

After three months of weekly lessons, Frasso finally joined his brother in the Blanchard band. He still remembers the first time he played and the unmistakable sound of "that tuba note." As time passed he found himself liking it - the tuba, the band experience, the fun. And the fun continued into high school when Frasso joined the Westford Academy Band (with his brother) and spent the next four years in the tuba

section. Frasso confesses to his youthful disdain for practice: "It wasn't that I practiced a lot. Playing was fun...just fun." And he is barely self-conscious as he describes his musicianship and marching skills as average.

Frasso had no plan of seriously pursuing a career in music. In fact, by the time he started considering colleges in his junior and senior years of high school, Frasso decided he would pursue engineering. He narrowed his search to schools that would satisfy his love

of band and football while providing him access to a marketable degree in engineering. "I ended up looking at a bunch of schools in the Midwest and the South that had good engineering programs...good schools. And they had a good football team and a big band."

Frasso found the University of Notre Dame

was a perfect fit. He headed off to South Bend, IN, with dreams of marching through the Stadium Tunnel on brisk, fall football Saturdays to play for 80,000 screaming Irish fans in the Band of the Fighting Irish...as an engineering major. He auditioned at band camp the summer of 1998 for Fr. George Wiskirchen, former assistant director of bands at Notre Dame and former band director at Notre Dame High School in

"VanderCook is where I learned to be a professional. I surprised myself with how much maturity I gained as a grad student."

Niles, IL, where Wiskirchen taught a trombone player who went on to join the band Chicago. Frasso still remembers his less-than-musical audition. But, once again, tubas were in demand and Frasso landed a spot. And he could not have been happier. Playing in the band and a good seat for football games were a sure thing and an engineering degree was within his reach.

Fast forward to the spring of 2000, Frasso's sophomore year at Notre Dame. On a typical early spring afternoon, Frasso was studying for his differential equations mid-term to no avail. Watching fellow students reveling in the warmth of the day from his dorm room window, he realized none of the classes and work he was doing to earn his engineering credentials interested him. Frasso was bored and worse still he just did not care about what he was learning. "I was just there, thinking that if I got through the classes that I'd get a degree and a job and everything would be fine." But engineering did not ignite his passion.

Frasso describes his epiphany with no regret. Something clicked and he began seriously considering being a band director. The differential equations mid-term behind him, Frasso headed home to Westford for spring break and kept his change of heart to himself. When he returned to campus, Frasso immediately reached out to music faculty to plot his course toward a degree in music. "It was the first mature thing I ever did, I think...to actually do the research and be thorough about what I was trying to do."

With a plan in place, Frasso advised his parents of his change of heart and major in a long email two weeks after spring break. Understandably, Frasso's parents were concerned this foray into music was a phase that would eventually pass. Six months of drama ensued, including some rather dark and scary periods when Frasso came to believe a career in music education was his last shot. Being unsuccessful simply was not an option.

Over the next three years Frasso matured, and began to change some bad habits and attitudes. Frasso's band experience expanded beyond the marching band and included pep band, concert band, and a brass quintet. He started private lessons and found himself stretching his range and really caring about his musicality. Frasso finally found his passion. Practice became a regular activity, performance chops mattered, and band continued to be Frasso's great love.

Notre Dame's band program also offered Frasso invaluable leadership experiences. He served as band treasurer, section leader, and co-section leader. Frasso was an active participant in Notre Dame's Bandlink, a band service program for local Catholic schools lacking music programs. Frasso joined fellow band members running after school band rehearsals and gave private





“VanderCook trains you to be a teacher with an emphasis on accountability. Show up, work hard, help with everything. It permeates the whole school.”

lessons on Sunday evenings to students. Frasso recalls his band days with unmistakable enthusiasm and pride, acknowledging every leadership position fueled and reaffirmed his decision to be a band director.

VanderCook landed on Frasso's radar thanks to Dr. Ken Dye, Notre Dame's director of bands, and graduate assistant Logan Biles (B02). They encouraged Frasso to look into the master's and certification program after he received his bachelor's degree in music theory, so Frasso called George Pierard (B63, M69) in the Admissions Office and applied. In April 2003, Frasso came to VanderCook and auditioned. Once accepted, he was awarded a graduate assistantship in the Ensembles Office, and life changed yet again for the tuba-playing former engineering student.

At VanderCook, Frasso discovered himself surrounded by other students who shared his desire to pursue a career in music education. Everything was exciting – living in Chicago, learning, practicing. Frasso even decided to perform his first recital. After six months of intense, focused practice, he found he improved remarkably as a player and went on to perform another recital for his master's project. As a graduate assistant, Frasso made a commitment to provide much more leadership than he had during his band experience at Notre Dame. He felt a responsibility to be an example to undergrads and wanted to be a model student. Looking back, Frasso says “VanderCook is where I learned to be a professional. I surprised myself with how much maturity I gained as a grad student.”

Student teaching at Vernon Hills High School and Gurnee Middle School gave Frasso even more incentive to pursue his goal of being a band director. By February 2005, he was actively looking for a position as a high school band director. With his master's degree in hand, Frasso covered the map with résumés and cover letters until an interview in rural Indiana led to a job offer at Benton Central Jr./Sr. High School in Oxford, IN. Frasso accepted and began overseeing a small band program in Oxford in fall of 2005. Frasso admits to being rather over-ambitious as he directed 6th through 12th grade band. But he is also confident he learned a lot about his students and even more about himself during his four-year tenure. When Dr. Menghini offered Frasso a position at VanderCook, Frasso was ready for a change and jumped at the chance to come back to Chicago.

In the summer of 2009, Frasso became the ensembles coordinator and director of outreach. Today his love of music, organizational expertise, and enthusiasm for VanderCook are invaluable to the college. Frasso enjoys his job at VanderCook and Chicago more than he ever imagined. Offering great food and plenty of neighborhood entertainment, the city provides the perfect backdrop to his single life. Outside VanderCook, Frasso is loyal to his Boston teams and is cautiously optimistic his beloved Notre Dame will eventually claim another national football championship.

At VanderCook, Frasso takes his role on staff seriously and recognizes the power of a VanderCook education. “VanderCook trains you to be a teacher with an emphasis on accountability...show up, work hard, help with everything. It permeates the whole school,” he says, and Frasso's respect for the influence that ethic has on students continues to drive his passion and commitment to music education. Thinking back to that spring day at Notre Dame, Frasso knows he has come a long way and the right way to the places he now calls home – Chicago and VanderCook.



Outreach

Sharing Our Passion for Music

ChoralFest, BandFest, and OrchestraFest

These festivals offer a non-competitive performance venue for middle school and high school ensembles. In addition to extensive feedback, ensembles receive a clinic following their performance. Festival evaluators provide constructive and practical suggestions to help each ensemble improve its performance. Comments are also included exclusively for directors. Each ensemble is provided written and audio copies of the judges' commentary, as well as a recording of their performance and a commemorative certificate. After the performance, each ensemble works on the performance music with a clinician for 30 minutes.

Seven Steps to a Better Band

Seven Steps to a Better Band, led by Dr. Tim Lautzenheiser and Dr. Charles Menghini, is tailored towards high school marching band programs. The program is designed to get high school students fired

up for the fall marching season. Activities help students develop their leadership and communication skills as well as teach them to run sectionals. In addition to the student workshop, VanderCook offers A Booster Shot, a free workshop designed to help parents discover new and exciting ways to enhance their role in the music program.

Day of Guitar

Day of Guitar is an opportunity for guitar students to work with skilled clinicians. The event is coordinated by Dr. Julie Goldberg, applied guitar instructor and director of the Classical Guitar Ensemble at VanderCook. Each student group is given the opportunity to perform, and all participants form the Day of Guitar Orchestra. Students rehearse and perform with the large guitar orchestra, receive coaching and instruction from many of Chicago's finest guitar teachers, and are able to perform an ensemble or solo piece in the afternoon



concert. Activities include the Guitar Orchestra rehearsal, a clinic with VanderCook jazz professor Tony Kidonakis (M09), lunch, an informal jam session, a mini-concert by the Third Coast Guitar Ensemble, and a performance featuring each school's ensemble and the Day of Guitar Orchestra.

Middle Level HonorFest

HonorFest provides advanced middle school musicians with an opportunity to work with a clinician in a large ensemble. Advanced band and choir middle school students are nominated by their directors. The bands and choirs rehearse during the morning and afternoon, and perform in the early evening. This year, the bands were conducted by Johnny Vinson, composer and retired director of bands at Auburn University, and Stacey Larson (M98), associate director of bands at VanderCook. Dr. Robert Sinclair, director of choral activities at VanderCook, conducted the choir.

All-Catholic Honor Band

Since 2004, VanderCook has hosted the All-Catholic Honor Band, bringing together the best musicians from Chicagoland's Catholic high schools. Advanced band students are selected by their directors to participate and perform repertoire with students from other schools who are at the highest performance level. The band rehearses throughout the morning and afternoon and performs in the early evening.

Fall Tour

During fall break, VanderCook's Percussion Ensemble, Chamber Singers, and Jazz Ensemble perform for a number of high schools in the greater Chicago area. The annual two-day tour is always a great opportunity for students to gain performing experience, as well as meet and encourage future music educators.

Day of Percussion

Kevin Lepper, applied percussion instructor and professor of percussion techniques and methods, coordinates the Day of Percussion. The day allows percussion students to experience percussion clinics and performances and work with guest clinicians. Each performing group plays for 30 minutes and then receives a 30-minute clinic. Local ensembles perform, and the VanderCook Percussion Ensemble presents a concert. Students are also able to compete in the Midwest Solo Contest, with three finalists performing at IIT's Hermann Hall.

Chicago Community Classical Guitar Ensemble

The Chicago Community Classical Guitar Ensemble was formed in 1997 by ensemble director and VanderCook faculty member Dr. Julie Goldberg. The ensemble consists of guitarists from many backgrounds, most of whom have professions outside of music. Professional musicians and music teachers participate as well. In addition to presenting concerts at VanderCook, the ensemble has performed at the 1999, 2001, 2003, and 2009 Mid-American Guitar Ensemble Festivals; Washington Jayne Smith Home; St. Jude Concert Series; Saint Mary of the Woods; Tinley Park Landmark Church Concert Series; Elmhurst Art Museum; People's Music School; Chicago Classical Guitar Society; and Saint Xavier and North Park Universities.

Toot 'N' Doodle

Since 1998, the Northwest Indiana Symphony Orchestra has run Toot 'N Doodle, a musical arts program designed to introduce 2nd & 3rd grade children to the four families of musical instruments. VanderCook students hone their teaching skills by



giving demonstrations and guiding children through hands-on touch and try-out sessions with each instrument. For many children this “musical petting zoo” is their first experience playing any musical instruments.

Community Drum Circle

Children, families, and the general public are invited to participate in VanderCook’s free weekly drum circles. These improvisational and collaborative workshops introduce participants to world percussion instruments and basic rhythm in a fun and creative environment. Drum circles are moderated by Michael Becker, world music and music history instructor at VanderCook. The Community Drum Circles are held on Saturdays from 11:00-11:45 a.m. at VanderCook. Full schedules are posted on VanderCook’s website.

The New Young Guitarist Program

Dr. Julie Goldberg, professor of applied guitar at VanderCook, leads free after-school guitar classes for fifth through eighth grade students at schools that are unable to offer instrumental music classes. This year, the program continues for its fourth year at James R. Doolittle Elementary School in Bronzeville, providing students with the first instrumental lessons in the school’s history. Plans are underway to expand to additional schools in the Bronzeville and Bridgeport neighborhoods, and to start an ongoing guitar ensemble combining students from all the participating schools.

Community Music Program

The Community Music Program offers a variety of low-cost individual lessons and group enrichment opportunities for children and adults. Students may take 30-minute individual lessons in piano, guitar, voice, any orchestral instrument, or jazz techniques at beginning, intermediate, or advanced levels. The Community Music Program also provides ensemble performance opportunities through the Chicago Community Classical Guitar Ensemble and the VanderCook Philharmonic Orchestra.







Dr. Lewis Schmidt

Chairman of the Board of Trustees

Greetings!

It is with a great deal of pleasure, but also with a great deal of anticipation for this coming year, that I write this letter.

I cannot emphasize enough how honored I am to serve as your Board Chairman. It is a humbling experience. I must tell you how proud I am of the members of the board, for their willingness to serve VanderCook, giving freely of their time, effort, and expertise.

This also holds true for the administration, staff, and above all, the outstanding faculty at VanderCook. These people truly go “above and beyond,” and make us all a “family.” I take my hat off to all of you. In addition, our student body never ceases to amaze me with what they can accomplish. They fully embrace learning and are truly committed to becoming professional music educators. Our alumni and friends really responded this year, growing the Passion Campaign into its best year to date. Thank you all so very much!

The reports from visits by our accrediting bodies continue to be rated One A in many areas. However, they all cite one concern in particular: our lack of space – for practice rooms, rehearsal space, faculty

offices, classroom space, storage space and, of course, a bonafide performance area.

I’m sure that most of you are familiar with our present facilities. VanderCook staff, faculty and students struggle daily with these conditions. As a collective group, we must now go the extra mile to find the solution to this problem. That solution, of course, is for all of us to pitch in.

Individual support is vital to sustaining VanderCook’s mission and enduring legacy. By introducing new

people to VanderCook – telling them the VanderCook story, bringing them to the campus, introducing the faculty and staff, and letting them see for themselves what vibrant, meaningful things happen here – we increase the breadth of our constituents. Our placement record is outstanding, and the accomplishments of our grads speak for themselves. We are unique! No one else does what we do, or does it as well!

**“With great anticipation,
we invite you to join us
– and help us, if you will –
to meet and conquer this
challenge of space, and
continue to educate the very
best in music educators.”**

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, administration, faculty, staff, and students, I extend our most gracious appreciation for all you have done for VanderCook in the past. With great anticipation, we invite you to join us – and help us, if you will – to meet and conquer this challenge of space, and continue to educate the very best in music educators.

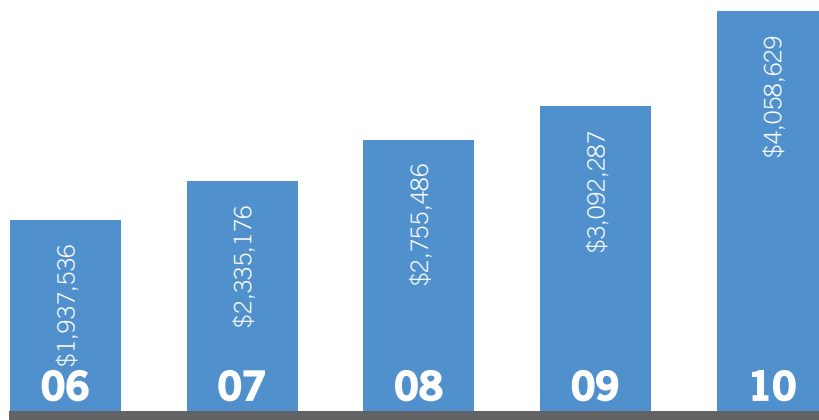
Statement of Financial Position

Fiscal Year Ending July 31, 2010

Assets	2010	2009
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 132,327	\$ 233,711
Tuition receivable	174,531	109,265
Grant receivable	1,000,000	0
Pledges receivable	96,642	177,838
Prepaid expenses and other assets	78,673	26,892
Cash held on behalf of the Alumni Association	30,006	30,655
Investments	2,032,067	1,933,595
Property and equipment, net	504,383	570,331
Deposits	<u>10,000</u>	<u>10,000</u>
TOTAL ASSETS	\$ 4,058,629	\$ 3,092,287

Liabilities and Net Assets	2010	2009
LIABILITIES		
Accounts payable	\$ <u>169,595</u>	\$ <u>203,746</u>
Accrued expenses	39,602	43,828
Unearned revenue	69,488	79,056
Deferred rent obligation	318,251	253,069
Obligations under capital lease	58,481	65,209
Funds held on behalf of Alumni Association	<u>30,006</u>	<u>30,655</u>
Total liabilities	\$ <u>685,423</u>	\$ <u>675,563</u>
NET ASSETS		
Unrestricted:		
Undesignated	\$ 962,303	\$ 1,035,594
Designated	<u>200,043</u>	<u>198,691</u>
Total unrestricted net assets	\$ <u>1,162,346</u>	\$ <u>1,234,285</u>
Temporarily restricted	\$ 1,800,068	\$ 821,647
Permanently restricted	\$ <u>410,792</u>	\$ <u>360,792</u>
Total restricted net assets	\$ <u>2,210,860</u>	\$ <u>1,182,439</u>
Total net assets	\$ <u>3,373,206</u>	\$ <u>2,416,724</u>
TOTAL LIABILITIES and NET ASSETS	\$ 4,058,629	\$ 3,092,287

College Assets



College Assets

Since 2006, the assets of the college demonstrate a pattern of progress. This steady increase is attributable to:

- new scholarships
- interest income on investments
- increased fundraising efforts
- support pledged for the capital campaign

Institutional Aid

2011:

\$706,956

2010:

\$658,317

While the economy has improved for many, our students are still vulnerable to fluctuations in federal and state aid opportunities. As part of our goal to attract the best and brightest candidates from across the country, VanderCook is committed to providing substantial assistance with institutional financial aid through a number of opportunities including:

- presidential awards
- academic scholarships
- student work study
- the Great Teachers Scholarship
- talent grants
- graduate assistantships
- privately funded scholarships

2011 Share Your Passion Campaign

TOTAL AMOUNT RAISED:

\$82,200

A total of 289 donors contributed to the annual campaign with an average gift of \$284.43 last year.

Alumni participation was at 7.6% this year with a total of 163 donors who gave an average gift of \$177.85.

Friends of the college, including college faculty and staff, contributed \$40,149 of the Passion Campaign total this year. The average gift for the 116 contributors in this category was \$346.11.

Board of Trustees and Alumni Association Board participation was at 100% in 2011.

Doing a Lot for Doolittle: New Young Guitarists



James R. Doolittle East Elementary, located in Chicago's Bronzeville neighborhood, shares the challenges of many public schools: attendance, truancy, the threat of gang-related activity after school hours, and a virtually nonexistent budget for arts programs. Throughout its existence, in fact, Doolittle has never been able to offer instrumental music lessons to any of its students.

All that changed in 2008 with a chance meeting, when VanderCook president Dr. Charles Menghini was introduced to Kathy Posner, who has advocated for Doolittle for 14 years. Posner knew all too well that the school needed an arts-based after-school program to offer their students, and a partner organization to make that happen. After a few meetings with Doolittle's administration, the New Young Guitarists Program was born.

Led by VanderCook's guitar instructor, Dr. Julie Goldberg, and assisted by select VanderCook students, the afterschool program has brought introductory lessons to dozens of Doolittle students aged 10-14. The program began in the spring of 2009, thanks to a grant from the D'Addario Music Foundation and a donation from the Hal Leonard Corporation, both of whom have supported the program continuously ever since. Additional funding from the Fanny R. Wurlitzer and Walter E. Heller foundations helped the program grow in the ensuing years.

In addition to playing basic melodies and chords, emphasis is placed on working with others and performing in a group setting. Exercises that develop musical memory, pitch recognition, and rhythmic improvisation are also incorporated into each session. By the end of each semester, the students perform publicly in recitals at Doolittle and VanderCook.

Teachers and parents noticed a difference in the students immediately. As one teacher observed of three "veteran" students returning for their second year, "When these students practice and play together, you see mutual respect, compassion, intelligence, and the ability to solve problems together."

Retired Doolittle principal Lori Lennox, who helped launch the program, is quick to point out that the success stories aren't just limited to the students' new musical

pursuits. “One student who was placed in foster care at a young age and considered a ‘special education’ student is now achieving academically and no longer considered “special education.” Another who would barely look at people while talking to them now looks straight into their eyes with much more confidence.”

A driving force of the program is Doolittle’s general music teacher, Paul Mulchrone. Mulchrone participates in every lesson, offering guidance and individual instruction when necessary. “Even after a long day of teaching, he brings enthusiasm and patience to the class,” says Goldberg. “The students really enjoy seeing their teacher in a relaxed mode, playing guitar and making music with them.”

Mulchrone beams when talking about the program, now in its fourth year at the school. “Words cannot express the joy I get out of seeing students look at a piece of music, get frustrated, feel like they might never be able to play it, practice hard, and then master it. This process prepares them well for other challenges they will face during their academic career and beyond.”

Although funding of the program must be raised from year to year, there’s no shortage of enthusiasm among Doolittle’s new guitarists, some of whom have even performed at VanderCook’s Day of Guitar event alongside more advanced high school students. “The Doolittle students really held their own,” noted Goldberg. “They played wonderfully and were courteous and attentive throughout the event.” As one Doolittle sixth grader puts it, “The thing I like most about guitar is that it keeps your mind sharp and you learn a new skill everyday.”

**“When these students practice and play together,
you see mutual respect, compassion, intelligence,
and the ability to solve problems together.”**

Joshua Noble, a current VanderCook senior and veteran assistant instructor in the program, cherishes the experience of working with first-time instrumentalists. “Helping out with the guitar program at Doolittle has been a great opportunity to share my passion for both teaching and playing guitar. Seeing them progress throughout the weeks, months, and even years is as rewarding to the students as it is to the instructors. Their genuine interest in learning is inspiring, and lets us have fun while we work hard for our concert at the end of the year.”

Winston Churchill once said, “We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give.” The guitar program at Doolittle exemplifies this notion, as well as VanderCook’s mission of changing lives forever through music education.

“Years from now, no one will remember what kind of car they drove or how much money they had in the bank,” reflects Posner. “But they’ll remember if they made a difference in the life of a child. Dr. Goldberg and the students from VanderCook have given so much to the young people at Doolittle who now have the wonderful opportunity of a musical education.”



A Passion for Community

Erica Chianelli

Erica Chianelli's relationship with VanderCook began involuntarily. Working for the Lakeside Bank branch in Chicago's Chinatown, agreeing to serve on the Board of Trustees of the college was part of her job description. Once Chianelli met the college president, Dr. Charles

Chianelli describes herself as "a typical Asian kid" whose relationship with music started in the 4th grade with piano and violin lessons taught in the Suzuki Method. She stayed with both instruments through the 8th grade and played violin in the orchestra. Content to sit second-to-last chair, Chianelli admired the girl who played first chair and recognized her classmate's superior dedication and musicality. Private piano lessons with an "awesome teacher" who lived just a bike ride down the block were always a welcome weekly outing. Chianelli remembers arriving early so she could take full advantage of the home-baked treats her teacher provided, particularly at the holidays.

"The actions of a leader speak louder than words. During Erica's tenure on the board, her contributions have resonated quite loudly. She can always be counted on to get the job done despite her busy schedule, and we are grateful."

– George Quinlan, VanderCook Trustee

Menghini, and experienced firsthand the enthusiasm that resonates through the halls, she "jumped on board." Chianelli wonders how anyone can meet Menghini and witness the life of VanderCook without getting hooked. "Charlie is excited and enthusiastic all the time. He lives and breathes VanderCook. The faculty and staff...the leadership...the passion and loyalty those people have for VanderCook and what they do is inspirational."

Chianelli herself is the personification of enthusiasm. Her smiles are warm and sincere, lighting up her deep brown eyes as she talks about the passion she now has for VanderCook and its vital place in the landscape and fabric of the Near South neighborhood the college has called home for over 100 years. Chianelli was first elected to the Board of Trustees in 2005. Now in her second term, Chianelli believes her greatest contribution to VanderCook is probably her ability to capitalize on her community connections to help raise VanderCook's profile throughout Chicago. "Anything I can do to help spread the word about VanderCook and get more people to be aware of the college, the better."

Though Chianelli's love of sports would eventually trump music when she reached high school, she credits those early musical experiences for much of her personal and professional success. "I remember going to contests in junior high and being so nervous. That performance experience early on has translated to my adult professional life. It definitely helped build my confidence and self-esteem." Her appreciation of music and awe of performance also grew out of those early musical endeavors. And the discipline and structure of practice definitely served her well throughout high school.

A three-sport athlete, Chianelli transferred her energies to cross country, basketball, and soccer at Libertyville High School in Libertyville, IL. After graduation in 1994, Chianelli entered Loyola University in Chicago on an academic and athletic scholarship. The former point guard focused her efforts on soccer and earning a degree, and in 1998 graduated with a bachelor's degree in Communication in Social Justice and a minor in sociology. Her professional life began at the MidAmerica Leadership Foundation (MLF), now called Goodcity, a non-profit that helps high potential community-based entrepreneurs turn their visions into a reality. Chianelli coordinated a program at MLF to help low-income families and individuals build their personal and financial assets.



From MLF, Chianelli took over the executive directorship of the Chinatown Chamber of Commerce. Her work there helped to foster and secure Chinatown's vibrant retail position and successful tourism industry, and protect the community from ethnic displacement. Her work with the chamber brought Chianelli to the attention of Ray Spaeth, then-president of Lakeside Bank, a locally owned, community-oriented bank with an active presence in Chinatown for over 40 years. Spaeth, himself a tireless advocate of giving back to one's community, was also serving as president of the chamber and witnessed Chianelli's ability to make things happen with her limitless energy and dedication to the community.

In 2003, Chianelli left the chamber and began her career with Lakeside Bank as Vice President of Business Development. Here, she capitalized on every opportunity to bring community stakeholders together to make the Near South neighborhood more vibrant. Fortunately for VanderCook, Chianelli brought her trademark energy and community spirit to the board. Chianelli has made presentations to first-year students at VanderCook, presenting valuable information about the importance of credit – how to build good credit and avoid financial traps. She also worked to bring Lakeside and VanderCook together to host one of the Near South neighborhood's most anticipated summer events.

The annual Summer Concert at the Clarke House Museum features the VanderCook graduate band in a free outdoor concert. Chianelli recalls that Ray Spaeth wanted to do something to provide the college a wider audience and thought the bank should help. Once all of the logistics were managed, Lakeside was able to make it one of the events on their annual community calendar. "We brought together two community institutions and created a partnership that represents each institution's commitment to the community, with a focus on families and building relationships."

Now in it's fifth year, the crowd has grown from 200 to over 600. The family-friendly evening includes a drum circle facilitated by VanderCook students and faculty, and picnic spreads that rival those on the lawns of the Ravinia Festival in Highland Park, Illinois. Chianelli says it's important to "provide this kid-friendly event for people raising families in the city. They should know about VanderCook and that the college is important to the neighborhood...to their kids and their family."

And if this suburban mother of three children under the age of seven has her way, even the Mayor of Chicago will know how important and vital VanderCook is - not only to the city, but also to the music community. "The general public in Chicago does not know how unique and special VanderCook is. This is the only one of its kind. People should know they have a one-of-a-kind college in their city." She takes her role as a board member seriously and believes her responsibility goes well beyond recruitment.

Chianelli is committed to making sure more people are aware of the VanderCook family – the passionate, loyal leadership, the caring faculty and staff who know every students' story, and the remarkably talented students. Chianelli vividly remembers the first VanderCook performance she saw. At her first commencement as a trustee, she sat in the Symphony Center on Michigan Avenue and witnessed the excitement unique to VanderCook. She is still excited about VanderCook six years later and looks forward to the college reaching new heights. With Chianelli's support, the sky might just be the limit.



Above: Erica Chianelli with her family
Below: At the TrusTEE Open Golf Outing



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Gifts to VanderCook can be increased – even doubled or tripled – with corporate matching gift programs. That’s what Ohio alum Steve Gilmore (M96) and his wife, Marilyn Kuchta have done for the past several years. The combination of Steve’s passion for music education and VanderCook and Marilyn’s background in the corporate sector inspired the couple to pursue a match for their commitment to the annual Share Your Passion campaign. They wanted to get the best “bang for the buck” and knew Marilyn’s employer, Chase, would be happy to magnify their donation to the college.

Steve and Marilyn work with Chase’s human resources department and corporate website to secure the match for their annual gift. Marilyn describes the process as “easy and worth the effort to do it.” Many companies look for ways to be good corporate citizens and they are particularly interested in supporting educational institutions like VanderCook. Companies typically have lists of approved match recipients. Should VanderCook not be listed, donors may contact Clairmarie Keenan (ckeenan@vandercook.edu or 312-225-6288, x255) for the college’s tax ID number to submit to their corporate HR office. The corporation then serves as the third party administrator and forwards the match directly to the college.

For Steve and Marilyn, the process has been a painless way to make their good gift better. Steve hopes that others – alumni, spouses, and parents – pursue matches for their contributions to the college. For Marilyn, this was also a way for her to thank VanderCook for the wonderful summer experiences Steve had pursuing his MEd. She hopes every alum recognizes the ways they can sustain the college. As Steve says, “VanderCook was there for me to nurture my passion for music. VanderCook was there for others. Help them be there for the next generations.”

Please contact Clairmarie Keenan, director of institutional advancement, with any questions about matching opportunities at ckeenan@vandercook.edu or 312-225-6288 x255.



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