

Citizen



Jeannette Sorrell, founding artistic director of the baroque orchestra Apollo's Fire, works with the Southland College Prep choir on a piece for the October 26th concert launching the Matteson School District 162 Strings Program. Photo by Eric Lites

MATTESON SCHOOL DISTRICT 162 LAUNCHES STRINGS PROGRAM

Students at the Matteson School District 162 will have their own Strings program thanks to a partnership between the school district and Apollo's Fire, a Grammy Award winning Baroque orchestra. **PAGE 2**



Two-Thirds of Parents Plan to Get Them Vaccinated Against COVID: Poll

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A renovation is on the way for the Vermont Street Station

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Serving The Black Community For Decades

NEWS

briefly

CHICAGO ELITE CLASSIC BASKETBALL SHOWCASE IS BACK

Celebrating a decade of spotlighting tomorrow's collegiate and professional basketball superstars, the 10th annual Chicago Elite Classic (CEC) Basketball Showcase is back. CEC will highlight the top girls and boys high school basketball teams in the Chicagoland area and from across the country. Teams compete for bragging rights to determine who is best of the best at CEC.

The Chicago Elite Classic will take place Friday-Saturday, December 3-4, at the Credit Union 1 Arena (formerly UIC). Teams for the 2021 showcase and matchups will be released in the next several weeks. Previous participants include Whitney Young Magnet High School, Simeon High School, and top high school basketball teams from Georgia, Maryland, Missouri, California and Texas. Notable Chicago Elite Classic alumni include Jabari Parker, Jahlil Okafor, Talen Horton-Tucker, Ayo Dosunmi, Kendrick Nunn and Jayson Tatum.

"As we enter the 10th year, the CEC continues to build upon its legacy of providing a well-deserved platform for top teams and players, showcasing our beautiful city and uniting the community via the game of basketball," says Tyrone Slaughter, head coach, Whitney Young Magnet High School and co-founder of the Chicago Elite Classic.

"It provides an opportunity for fans to watch the future stars of tomorrow. The level of athleticism among Chicago Elite Classic teams is unmatched. These young women and men put their heart and soul into this sport, and to watch them play at this caliber is awe-inspiring to many," says Robert Smith, head coach, Simeon High School and co-founder of Chicago Elite Classic.

For more information on the Chicago Elite Classic, visit www.chicagoeliteclassic.com and follow CEC on social media at @ChiEliteClassic Twitter @ChicagoEliteClassic Instagram and Facebook.

CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS ANNOUNCE RECORD-HIGH GRADUATION RATE

Chicago Public Schools CEO Pedro Martinez today announced the District's record-high five-year graduation rate of 83.8 percent, up by nearly 27 percentage points from 2011 when the rate was 56.9 percent. The four-year rate saw a similar gain, increasing 26 percentage points in the same time span and remaining nearly level since last year at 80.2 percent for the Class of 2021. Increased graduation rates among students of all racial groups led to the overall gain, bringing the District closer to its Five-Year Vision goal of reaching a 90 percent graduation rate by 2024.

"This is a wonderful sign of our District's progress," said CEO Martinez. "The last time I worked for CPS, our graduation rates were nowhere near where they are now, and I am so proud of each and every Class of 2021 graduate and the many teachers and family members who supported them, especially amid this global pandemic. We are excited and ready to ensure more students reach this milestone, equipped and ready to succeed in college and careers."

CEO Martinez joined District and school leaders as well as students at Amundsen High School Thursday afternoon to celebrate the gains and encourage continued growth across CPS. Principals from neighborhood high schools with the top 10 graduation rates for the Class of 2021 also joined the event which featured musicians from the Amundsen High School Orchestra and a future Class of 2022 graduate.

Matteson School District 162 Launches Strings Program

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BY TIA CAROL JONES

Students at the Matteson School District 162 will have their own Strings program thanks to a partnership between the school district and Apollo's Fire, a Grammy Award winning Baroque orchestra.

On Oct. 14th, there was a concert featuring Apollo's Fire and singers Rodrick Dixon and Alfreda Burke at Southland College Prep Charter High School for the students in the school district.

Jeannette Sorrell, the artistic director of Apollo's Fire, loves working with children and has always wanted to bring classical music to children who otherwise wouldn't be exposed to it. She wouldn't be a professional musician today if she had not taken advantage of a free music program, with free strings lessons, when she was in school. It changed her life. The Ohio-based Chamber Orchestra is doing a concert series in Chicago and wanted to also bring its educational initiative to the city.

The hope is that 50 to 80 students will participate in the new strings program. The program will start with students in fourth through sixth grade. "We are excited to work with this world-class musical group to bring the beauty of classical music to our students," said Dr. Blondean Y. Davis, superintendent of the Matteson School District 162 and CEO of Southland College Prep Charter High School in Richton Park. "We believe in educating the whole child and music is an important part of that education. Providing an opportunity for our students to learn orchestral music from some of the best musicians in the world is a dream come true."

Rodrick Dixon and his wife Alfreda Burke connected Apollo's Fire to the Matteson School District. Dixon and Burke thought having a strings program in the school district would be a good addition to its curriculum.

"For the students to learn these instruments with private instruction, and also to play in an ensemble, certainly enables them to be disciplined and learn a discipline. Also, music is the most cognitive of the fine arts," Burke said, adding that music involves mathematics, history and language.



From left, tenor Rodrick Dixon and Southland student Stephen Ford practice their solos during rehearsal for the October 26th concert with the Apollo's Fire Baroque Orchestra. Photo by Eric Lites

Dixon and Burke both have performed all over the world with major symphonies and orchestras. They have done television from China to South Africa to London. Burke made her debut at Carnegie Hall with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and Dixon made his debut at Carnegie Hall with the Cincinnati Symphony and American Symphony Orchestra.

Dixon and Burke currently have a show called "Too Hot to Handel," which is in its 17th year at the Auditorium Theater. The tenor and soprano have been involved in the entertainment and arts for a long time.

Burke believes in the whole gestalt of a child and the way music enriches them. It has the ability to expand a child's world.

"The more information about periods, times, customs, traditions, different composers, that's just very enriching, and how they're relevant to your world today. Nothing under the sun is new, so just to learn what Handel did... Their music is relevant," Burke said.

Burke added, although the music of Baroque composers like Handel and Vivaldi are different than what young people are listening to today, there are also similarities. One example is the way Handel and Vivaldi used their music to benefit the social justice issues of their time.

Dixon was impressed by the way Davis perpetuates the idea that there isn't anything the students cannot achieve.

"The whole idea of having a string orchestra where she would, starting in the fourth grade, and handing a child a Viola or Cello or a Double Bass instrument, fits into her ideal about what a child can expect when they walk into an institution of education," Dixon said.

The student is able to do something they can be proud of, having the discipline to learn an instrument and having a practice regimen. It can carry over into their academics. Dixon and Burke are excited to see what will come from the students who participate in the program.

Dixon said while it is important that Black children have exposure to the "other side" but the "other side" should have exposure to Black children.

"The genius that comes from our children is not when the 'other side' is providing help, it's when our children are providing exposure to them about what our children can do when given the opportunity," he said.



NOTICE OF PUBLIC OUTREACH
Riverside Drive Infrastructure Improvements
City of Calumet City, County of Cook, Illinois

Notice is hereby given to all interested persons that the City of Calumet City will hold a Public Outreach at the City of Calumet City's Training Center, 24 State Street, Calumet City, Illinois, on Friday, November 19, 2021, from 8:30am to 11:00am.

The purpose of this public outreach is to share technical information about the City's Riverside Drive infrastructure improvements projects and the continued vision of DSIR (Dolton/State Street Industrial Region) which includes the Riverside Drive location. Project construction is funded by the United States Economic Development Administration (\$3,400,000) and the County of Cook (\$844,000).

All current health guidelines, including social distancing, will be followed.

For more information contact 708-891-8139