

Guitar club gets strumming at Boys & Girls Club with BlackCat Music grant

by Kate Evans

Seven teen members of the Morgan County unit of the Boys and Girls Club of the Eastern Panhandle are now learning how to play guitar through a weekly guitar club program that's being provided through BlackCat Music Cooperative.

BlackCat Music Cooperative executive director Janet Gauthier said they were excited to receive a \$2,300 grant from the Eastern West Virginia Community Foundation McMillan Family Fund that fully funds the 28-week Boys and Girls Club guitar club program that began November 1. The grant purchased seven guitars, guitar cases, music stands, instruction books and guitar straps and pays the instructor's salary.

Learning chords & songs

The teens will get to keep the guitars if they complete the program, which includes learning the instrument, chords, songs and some music theory. Guitar club instructor Jason Hiles is teaching two half-hour classes of small group guitar instruction each week at the Boys and Girls Club.

Hiles is using a four-chord songbook which will get kids right into learning chords and songs to engage them, Gauthier said. At the end of the program, they may have the teens do a small music performance at the Boys and Girls Club.

Hiles, a Berkeley Springs resident, said he's been playing guitar for 19 years and



Boys and Girls Club members Gabby Warren, Robert Holmes and Abigail Warren work with guitar instructor Jason Hiles at guitar club. Seven club members are getting guitar lessons through a BlackCat Music Cooperative program that was funded through a \$2,300 grant from the Eastern West Virginia Community Foundation McMillan Family Fund.

that he started playing drums when he was three years old. He's enjoying teaching the kids how to play guitar. Gauthier said Hiles has experience working with kids through his church's youth camp.

Excited about club, grant

Guitar club member Robert Holmes, a fifth grader, has wanted to learn how to play guitar for a year. Holmes said they learned the names of all six guitar strings, the notes on the high E string and how to tune the guitar and work it the first week of class. He's happy to know that he'll get a guitar when he finishes the program.

Guitar club member Gabby Warren, age 15, said the club is great for learning guitar if

you've grown up with one in the house and never knew how to play it.

Morgan County Boys and Girls Club unit director Chris Risinger said he loved having a guitar program at the Boys and Girls Club years ago and having music there. The club lost funding for the program and he had wanted to find a way to bring music back to the club.

Risinger was excited when Gauthier approached him about starting a guitar club. He said he wished he'd had an opportunity like this when he was growing up and that it was a real privilege for members to be able to learn guitar at the club.

Gauthier began the Black-Cat Music Cooperative

501c3 non-profit organization in January and said they now have three viable programs with the support of endowments.

Gauthier and son Adam Kary own BlackCat Music Shop and Studio.

Their mission

BlackCat Music Cooperative's mission is providing in-school and after-school music enrichment learning opportunities like music lessons, personal instrument instruction and performance mentoring for young people of all ages in the community. For more information about the Black-Cat Music Cooperative, call 703-232-2825 or go to their website or social media page.