

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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THE INSTITUTE OF MUSIC GIVES BACK:
LED BY GRANDDAUGHTER OF ENVIRONMENTAL
CHAMPION, STUDENTS RAISE \$1,800;
PRESENT CHECK TO GROUNDWORK ELIZABETH
AT HOLIDAY PARTY THURSDAY, DECEMBER 18



Institute Assistant Director Porche Hardy and Executive Director Alysia Souder present a check to Groundwork Elizabeth's Executive Director Jonathan Phillips and Rocio Morales. (Photo: Matthew Ferro)

(Elizabeth, NJ) – The Institute of Music for Children, New Jersey's fastest growing arts-based youth development agency, is proud to announce that its students have raised \$1,800 for Groundwork Elizabeth as the recipient of their HarmonyKidsGive donation drive. They presented a check to Groundwork Executive Director Jonathan Phillips at the Institute Holiday Party on Thursday, December 18. Mayor Chris Bollwage attended the ceremony, along with over 160 Institute family members.

“We are greatly honored and deeply humbled that the children chose us, and personally gave of their own time and resources”, said Groundwork Elizabeth Executive Director Jonathan Phillips. “This donation by children motivates us even more strongly to lead our community and share opportunities for cleaning, planting, and greening our community, making it better tomorrow than it is today.”

Groundwork Elizabeth was selected as an extension of the Summer Institute show – “No Day But Today”, an original musical about climate change that raised student environmental awareness encouraged them to play a role in the issue. Over 180 students took part in 5 performances in August for over 400 family and friends.

During the 5-week Summer Institute, students competed in teams to see who could raise the most for Groundwork. At one table, Rachael Filippone made an individual donation of \$200. The staff was stunned, and called her mother to confirm her permission for her daughter's largesse.

Angelica Filippone, Rachael's mother, told the Institute that at first Rachael thought she was giving to help less fortunate kids, as they had done the year prior. “I told her it would go to the environment.”

Rachael immediately thought of her late grandmother, Ella Filippone, the tenacious founder of the Passaic River Coalition, who started fighting for the health of New Jersey’s environment in 1969. Over the next 40 years, the Coalition raised hundreds of millions for environmental causes, and protected the river from industrial run-off and new development.

Rachael and her family, devout Christians, prayed on the idea. Angelica asked Rachael if this gift “was what was in her heart”. Rachael said yes, and the donation was made.

“We teach her that when you give blessings, blessings will come to you,” said Mrs. Filippone. “The Institute is one of our blessings, so we wanted to help.”

The donation drive is part of the Institute’s core vision of H.A.R.M.O.N.Y. – Helping Achieve Responsible Motivated Optimistic Neighborhood Youth. 178 RESPONSIBLE students choose Groundwork as a NEIGHBORHOOD charity.

Groundwork Elizabeth improves the community by empowering people, businesses, educational institutions and other organizations to promote environmental, economic and social well-being. They are the lead designer of the Elizabeth River Trail, the host of the Elizabeth Green Team, and organize several community gardens throughout the area.

The community garden was a favorite point of connection for Institute students. 2014 marks the second year of the HARMONY Garden, a 1000-square foot Bio-Dynamic SPIN Farm located on the campus of the Third Westminster Presbyterian Church. Students farm in the summer, cooking the food in a farm-to-table movement and donating the surplus to Institute families.



Institute students work in the HARMONY Garden. (Photo: Joanne Hayes)

“The Harmony Garden at the Institute is very telling,” said Mr. Phillips. “Harmony exists in music, harmony must exist in Nature, and during this Season, there is an awareness that we need to pursue greater harmony towards all.”

“This place is blessed,” said Institute of Music Executive Director Alysia Souder. “It never ceases to amaze me how our community comes together in such spectacular ways. Rachael’s story, the summer show, Jonathan’s amazing work in the city – everything comes together to make a miracle.”

ABOUT THE INSTITUTE OF MUSIC FOR CHILDREN: The Institute of Music for Children develops the personal and communal potential of 550 urban youth annually by offering economically accessible, high-quality arts



training in a secure environment. The Institute believes that artistic expression and the creative process prepare children for success, endow them with life skills and self-confidence, and realize our vision of H.A.R.M.O.N.Y - Helping Achieve Responsible Motivated Optimistic Neighborhood Youth.

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