



SPRING

NEWSLETTER 2026

A Message from the Executive Director

Exciting things are happening at the Joy of Music School, and you can feel it.

There is a fresh sense of energy and excitement among our students, families, volunteers, and staff as we move toward more performance opportunities, deeper community, and new ways for our children to shine.

This spring, we are celebrating growth, connection, and the many people who help make JOMS such a special place. Thank you for being part of this work and for believing in what music can do in the life of a child.

Michael Ray
Executive Director



A NEW STAGE FOR JOMS

Sometimes, big things begin with a small act of courage.

JOMS is thrilled to announce that, thanks to the generous support of the Morgan Wallen Foundation, our glass lobby entrance will soon be transformed into a small performance venue for JOMS students and members of the community.

What makes this gift especially meaningful is the story behind it. JOMS student Madeline, just nine years old, took it upon herself to write a handwritten letter to the Morgan Wallen Foundation, asking for help for her music school. Her letter was heartfelt, hopeful, and impossible to ignore, and the Foundation responded in a big way.

For Madeline, the moment was deeply emotional. "I was so happy that I was able to do something for my music school after they had done so much for me," she said. "I never thought a nine-year-old could make a difference, but I think maybe I did."

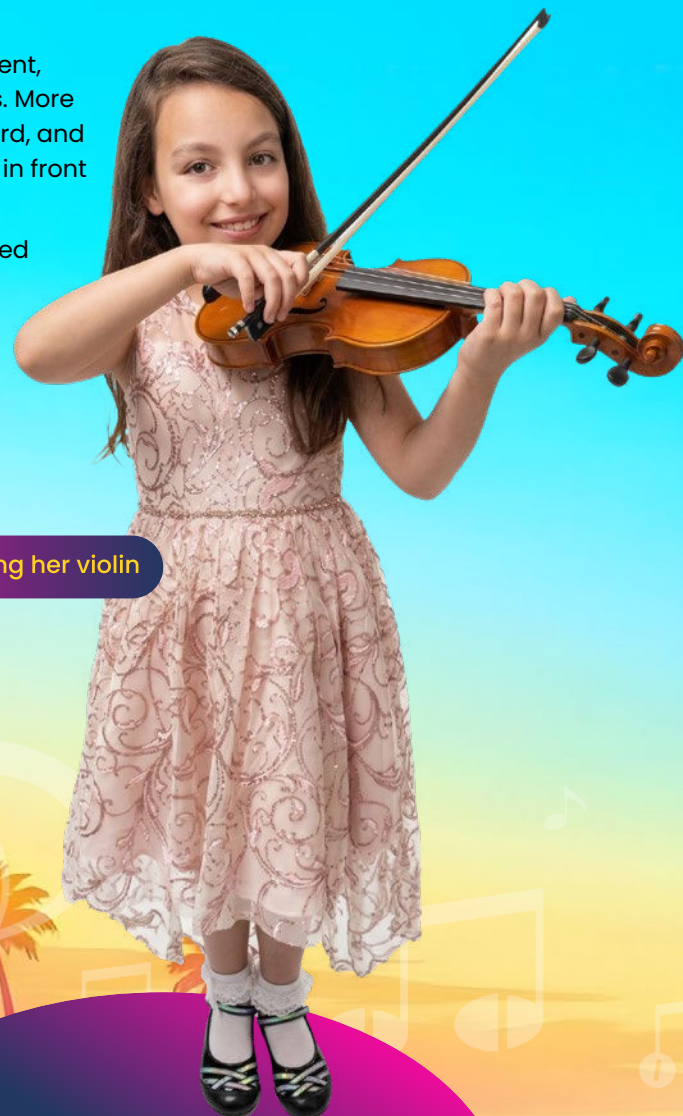
And she did.

Because of this extraordinary act of initiative and generosity, JOMS will soon have a new space where students can perform, build confidence, and share their music with others. The project is expected to be completed by the beginning of May 2026.

Planned improvements include a small stage, lighting, sound equipment, livestream capability, chairs, artwork, and needed electrical upgrades. More than just a renovation, this will be a space for children to be seen, heard, and celebrated, a place where their hard work and talent can come to life in front of family, friends, and the wider community.

At JOMS, we believe music opens doors. In this case, one student helped open one herself. Similarly, the [Morgan Wallen Foundation](#) believes in supporting youth by providing opportunities in music and sports.

If you would like to support the Lobby/Performance Space campaign, gifts may be made online through our website or by returning the enclosed remittance form and checking the box for the Lobby/Performance Space Fund.



Madeline playing her violin



VOLUNTEER TEACHER JAM NIGHT STRIKES A CHORD



We are deeply grateful to our wonderful volunteer teachers for their continued support and dedication to the mission of JOMS. Their generosity makes our work possible, and their love of music is felt not only in lessons, but in the community they help create.

From that spirit, a new tradition has begun: Volunteer Teacher Jam Night.

One of the most exciting additions to the JOMS community this spring has been our new monthly jam session. We have held two gatherings so far, and both have been a huge success. The evening gives volunteer teachers a chance to build community with one another and do something they love: make music together.

Relaxed, low-stakes, and joyful, Jam Night is all about connection, creativity, and the love of music. We plan to continue the event on the fourth Tuesday of each month from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. The evening is open to the community, whether you want to join in and play or simply come enjoy the music.

Help Us Reconnect with JOMS Alumni

JOMS is partnering with Sam DeHart, a PhD student in the University of Tennessee, Knoxville Psychology Department, along with her team of volunteers, to reconnect with former JOMS students and teachers.

This project is a meaningful opportunity for JOMS to reconnect with its past, hear stories that mattered, and learn what our alumni are doing today.

If you are a former JOMS student or teacher and would be willing to complete a brief survey, please contact: jomsalumni@gmail.com



JOMS STUDENTS SHINE AT THE NFMC KNOXVILLE FESTIVAL



Ms. Kiran with Valerie

JOMS students made a strong showing at the National Federation of Music Clubs Knoxville Festival on March 1, 2026.

This year marked the first time JOMS string students participated in the festival. The violin duo of Katherine and Samuel performed two duets, while violinists Caleb and Valerie each performed two solo selections. All four students, taught by JOMS Strings Lead Lisa Muci-Eckhoff, received a Superior rating, the festival's highest honor.

JOMS piano student Leon Yanchuk, a student of Master Volunteer Teacher Kris Rucinski, also performed in the festival and received a Superior rating.

The non-competitive festival provides students with valuable performance opportunities as well as comments and ratings from judges. JOMS is also grateful to Knoxville pianist and teacher Ms. Kiran Seth, who generously volunteered to accompany our string students at the festival.

We are proud of these students for representing JOMS with such excellence.

Music for Littles Continues to Grow

Because of overwhelming demand, JOMS has added an additional section of Music for Littles, our class for the youngest JOMS students, beginning at age four.

Taught by Miss Lorraine, this class has quickly become one of our most popular offerings. With two sections now in place, we are excited about the possibility of growing to three by next year.

This kind of growth reflects both the enthusiasm of our families and the continuing need for high-quality music experiences for children in our community.



The music train with Miss Lorraine.

Save the Date

DINING FOR JOY

Dining for Joy, Knoxville's biggest music, dance, and food party, returns this year at Marble Hall in Lakeshore Park on May 21 beginning at 6:30 p.m.

The evening will feature Knoxville's premier yacht rock band, Smooth Sailor, along with delicious international food and performances by JOMS students.

The vibe is casual and festive, so wear your favorite Hawaiian shirt or spring dress and dance the evening away in support of music and access for Knoxville's youth.

Tickets are \$75 per person, and sponsorships and tables are available at given QR code below:



We hope to see you there.



A NOTE OF THANKS

A special thank you to the Katelyn Oliver Memorial Opportunity Fund for Music and Music Education, through the East Tennessee Foundation. With this support, JOMS will continue creating and finding summer opportunities for our students.

Welcoming New Leadership

JOMS is pleased to welcome Mick Reed as our new Board President, along with four new 2026 board members: Mick Reed (New president), Andrea Warnick, Erica White, Mac Comer, and Kathryn Schrader (Left to right).

We are grateful for their enthusiasm, leadership, and belief in the mission of JOMS.



OUTREACH PROGRAM UPDATE

Spring has been a busy season for the JOMS Outreach Program. Even with weather-related delays earlier in the semester, our outreach work has continued to grow as we build new partnerships and bring music instruction to more children across the community.

One of our newest partnerships is with Vine Middle Magnet School, where a JOMS Teaching Artist now works each week with beginning sixth-grade band students in small group lessons. It has been exciting to help these young musicians build confidence and strengthen their early skills, and the partnership is already off to a wonderful start.

Looking ahead, JOMS expects to work with more than ten additional partner organizations this summer, including Boys and Girls Clubs, local churches, schools hosting camps or summer learning programs, and the East Tennessee Freedom School.

You can also find JOMS out in the community at several

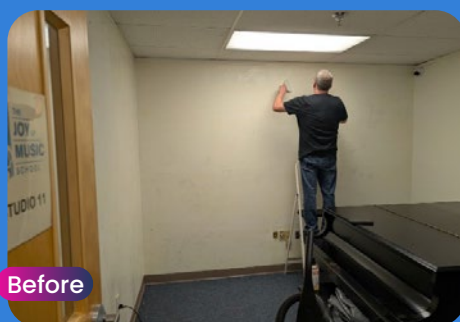


upcoming events this spring and summer, including the Dogwood Arts Festival, Zoo Knoxville's Art Celebration, and the Knoxville Museum of Art's Second Sunday festivities.

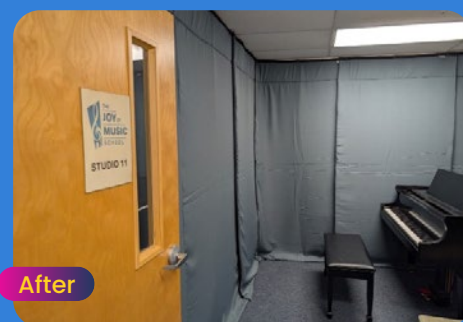
As our outreach work continues to expand, so does our need for teaching artists and in-house volunteers. To learn more, please contact Anthony Hussey at education@joyofmusicschool.org or anthony@joyofmusicschool.org

Giving Tuesday

Thanks to Giving Tuesday support, important improvements are already underway. Ed is hard at work replacing soundproofing in all 16 studios.



Before



After

Help Keep the Star Prize Cabinet Stocked

JOMS is always glad to receive donations for our Star Prize Cabinet. New toys, games, and \$10 gift cards to a variety of retailers are always appreciated and may be dropped off at the school.

Supporters may also make a financial gift toward the Star Program by noting that designation when donating.



Bethany earning a Star Prize

THANKS FROM EVERYONE AT JOY OF MUSIC & OUR SPONSORS!

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The Joy of Music provides free lessons, instruments, music, and materials to hundreds of Knoxville-area children who would not otherwise have access. For more information, including how to volunteer, donate, or sponsor, please visit: www.joyofmusicschool.org



WINTER PERFORMANCE HIGHLIGHTS

JOMS students had a strong winter performance season, with 89 students participating in end-of-semester performances during Fall 2025.

Highlights included performances at Holiday Sparkles and Spirits by Katherine and Samuel, the JOMS Music Makers class, and the Baritone Ukulele class, as well as seasonal music from Swing Time Big Band featuring JOMS senior Cora.

Additional winter performances included the Winter Strings Showcase, the Winter Recital, and the Zoom Recital, which together featured 68 students and 9 volunteer teachers.

HOLIDAY SPARKLES AND SPIRITS

Holiday Sparkles and Spirits was a joyful evening to remember. The event featured wonderful performances by JOMS students, seasonal music from a live swing band, and special guest emcee Abby Ham.

Through ticket sales and both silent and live auctions, the evening raised important funds to support the ongoing work of JOMS and help us continue serving children in our community.

We are also excited to share that the event will return in a refreshed form later in 2026. Stay tuned for more details.

