

Reflections

Spring 2011

Tampa, FL

Rocker Excites Pyramid Students

By Terry Cone
Performing Arts Coordinator

On two recent Fridays, Pyramid Tampa was rockin' and rollin' with visits from high energy rocker **Michael Levy**.

Mr. Levy is the founder of the Academy of Rock, a local music school that specializes in preparing students to become rock musicians. He also created Music Motivation, Improvisation and Rehabilitation programs.

He first arrived at Pyramid on Jan. 28 with guitar and amplifier in hand, and visited several classrooms. Soon the halls echoed with classic rock from Chuck Berry and Elvis to the Rolling Stones and the Grateful Dead.

"It was really cool," says student **Brian Kazimer**. "The music was great and Michael had a lot of energy."

In fact, that energy led Mr. Levy to jump on tables and chairs to strum out guitar riffs, which delighted students and made them feel they had front row seats at a concert.

In each classroom, Mr. Levy took requests. **Stern Hedrick** was treated to his favorite Johnny Cash song and **Christina Hollaway** received an on-the-spot composition titled



Michael Levy brings ol' time Rock n' Roll to Pyramid students.

"Happy Clown." **Joe Bunn** joined Mr. Levy in an impromptu Elvis medley in the courtyard.

The "Rock 'n Roll" day was so successful, Mr. Levy returned on Feb. 25. That day was equally amazing. **Stephen Gelsinger** and **Jimmy Millwater** jammed with air guitars to Mr. Levy's rendition of "Jumping Jack Flash" while other students and staff clapped and stomped their feet in time to the music.

"I truly enjoyed meeting and connecting with

(Continued on page 2)

Support Pyramid Tampa at Kasey's Golf Tournament

— See Page 7 for details —

Rock n' Roll

(Continued from page 1)

everyone at Pyramid and had an exceptional time during my visits,” says Michael Levy.

Mr. Levy's visits also served as training for a Pyramid journalism class taught by **Chris Poulos**. Students **Eric Nelson, Christina Hollaway, Regina Glover, Brian Kazimer, Stern Hedrick, Jackie Books**

and **Genevieve Smart** interviewed and took photos of Mr. Levy for a class project.

Community Activities Enrich Experience

Pyramid is constantly seeking new ways to engage its students, and to provide them the opportunity to become full participants in their communities. What better ways than to send Pyramid students out and bring community members in?

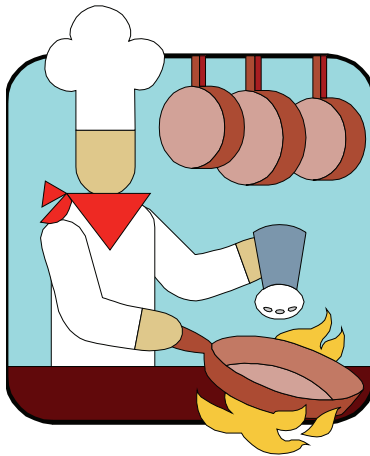
MLK Day Parade

Uh-oh, this is a roller-coaster-ride story, going from happy to sad, back to happy

Pyramid students and staff entered a float in the 2011 Martin Luther King Day Parade.

The float was an eye-catcher in the black history colors of yellow, black, green and red, and included a 10-foot arch to showcase the king and queen of the recent Pyramid Prom, **Marquis Langhorne** and **Michelle Barefoot**.

Students and staff worked for days on the construction of the float, which seated eight students and two staff. A larger



group of students was to meet at a park on the parade route and cheer on the riders.

Unfortunately, the skies opened up sending down rain, thunder and lightning. The parade was cancelled. The faces of our students and staff were as downcast as the weather, but quickly lit up again when the entire group went bowling.

Later, Building Superintendent **Will Robinson** took students on rides around the building in our beautiful MLK Day float.

Cooking Class Guest Chef

Julia Childs has nothing on Pyramid Tampa! We have started a Guest Chef program, in which community members share recipes and techniques with the cooking class.

The program began in December with Chef **Dr. Steve Tauber**, a political science professor at USF. Dr Tauber has a passion for cooking and animal rights, making a vegetarian recipe mandatory.

Dr. Tauber showed students how to prepare an Asian dish that included tofu. Students loved the whole experience.

“The Pyramid students were genuinely more interested in learning than many of my college students,” Dr. Tauber said. “I was excited about how hands-on the class was.”

For more information on becoming a Pyramid Guest Chef, call Meghan Hogan at 813-928-4510.

Fundraising To Secure Our Future

Andrea Thornley
Director

These days everyone is concerned about the state of the economy and the uncertainty of jobs, housing and education across the nation.

At Pyramid Tampa we worry about students missing days because their services are being cut, and we worry about rate reductions that create missed opportunities in the community, such as visiting art galleries, museums and parks.

As I write this, the Florida legislature is considering huge reductions in services and rates. Cuts of the magnitude under discussion would increasingly isolate people with disabilities and deny them opportunity to become productive members of our community.

All this means that now more than ever, Pyramid Tampa is focused on fundraising to ensure that we can continue to serve students and provide them with quality art supplies and performance materials as well as activities and special events to enrich their lives.

Pyramid provides a day rich in learning, socializing, creating and ultimately transforming individuals' lives as students gain self confidence, learn life skills and take on new identities as artists or performers.

Pyramid cannot continue to provide quality services solely through state and federal funding. Now more than ever, our survival depends on community support .

We know that times are tough and the last



*Ms.
Thornley*

thing most people can afford to do is write checks for a non-profit organization. But we are asking you to dig deep and show your support by donating any amount, no matter the amount.

Pyramid needs your support at these events:

March 31, Thursday, 7-9:30 a. m. Pancake Breakfast at Pyramid, \$5.

April 17, Kasey's Golf Tournament. Sponsors are needed at many different levels. All proceeds from sponsorships and donations go directly to Pyramid Tampa. (see page 7 for more information)

May 22, Sunday, 2 p.m., the Pyramid Players will perform at the Blessed Spring Tea at Christ the King Church in South Tampa. Tickets are \$10, and Pyramid receives 25 percent of the profits.

June 3-5, the Pyramid Players perform at the Family Cafe Conference and Governor's Summit on Disabilities in Orlando. The Players receive room stipends, but funds for food, drink and gas must be obtained.

June 24, Friday, 6-9 p.m., Pyramid Open House featuring an art and jewelry exhibit, and performance by the Pyramid Players.

More events will take place throughout the year. Keep an eye out for newsletters and e-mails. Won't you consider supporting Pyramid with a donation? Contact me at 813-931-3986 or athornley@pyramidinc.org.

Thank you all for your constant support throughout the years. We truly cannot do it without you!

Well-Traveled Artist Leads Art Program

Pyramid Tampa welcomes new Visual Arts Coordinator **Britzel Vasquez**, who joined the staff last September as an art instructor.

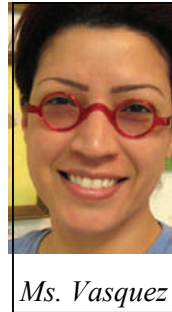
Ms. Vasquez became coordinator in February when Bob Terri retired.

Born in the mountains of Puerto Rico, Ms. Vasquez moved to Tampa in 1988. She received a Bachelor of Arts and a Master of Fine Arts degree from the University of South Florida. She is an Adjunct Professor at the University of Tampa.

Traveling and art are two of Ms. Vasquez' passions, which she combined by visiting more than 18 countries study their art.

Her students are thrilled with her travel stories and reflections on art from such places as China, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

Ms. Vasquez became interested in working with individuals with developmental



Ms. Vasquez

disabilities because her nephew is physically and intellectually disabled. In 2004, she became an art instructor at Project Return in Tampa, a mental health organization.

"I truly believe my life is directed to teaching and assisting adults with developmental and physical disabilities," Ms. Vasquez said. "I feel such joy and a sense of accomplishment every time I work with the students at Pyramid, more than I have felt in any other teaching situation."

Pyramid Bids Fond Farewell To The Sheriff

Ode to Sheriff Bob

"He's left an indelible imprint in countless ways

*As a master of so many skills
From banker to designer to
artist and more*

You name it—he always fulfills."

These are the first lines of a poem read at **Bob Terri's** retirement party on Feb. 18. Mr. Terri has been the Visual Arts Coordinator for six years. Students, staff, families and friends gathered to say "good bye and good luck" to Sheriff



Sheriff Bob with his memory frame.

Bob, so named because of his habit of wearing a sheriff's badge on his art apron.

"It was a bittersweet moment," Director **Andrea Thornley**

said. "Bob has been such an asset to Pyramid for so long that we hate to see him go, but we know he wants to move on to the next stage in his life."

Students and staff created a memory frame containing photos, various memorabilia (including a sheriff's badge) and a paraphrase of one of Mr. Terri's favorite sayings "One need not wait a single moment to make the world more beautiful."

Thank you, Sheriff Bob, for six beautiful years.

The Players Are Learning and Performing

By Terry Cone
Performing Arts Coordinator

The Pyramid Players are gearing up for 2011, learning new songs and dances and scheduling performances.

A tribute to Motown is in the works with such classics as "Get Ready, Here I Come," "Heat Wave," "Land of 1000 Dances," and that's just the tip of the iceberg.

The performers are not the only ones getting excited. Students and staff who are just passing the music and dance rooms are tapping their toes and moving their hips!

Private Lessons

Most performance classes are small so that each individual can advance to the best of his or her ability.

Private voice and instrument lessons are being added, with one-on-one dance lessons planned for later in the year. Selected students will take two half-hour lessons each week in addition to their regular schedule.

"Private music lessons have long lasting benefits for each student, developing skills such as concentration, listening, self-expression and communication," music teacher **Zanda Moore** said.

"Perhaps the most important aspect of private music lessons is self-esteem. Studies show that students who excel in private music lessons also excel in other areas."

Other benefits of private lessons include strengthening techniques, developing an engaging stage presence and health benefits such as



Eric Taylor taking private guitar lessons.

deep breathing and good posture.

A Rip Roaring Good Time!

Rocking and a Ringing was the title of Pyramid's holiday show. Students wore bells on their wrists and their jingling accompanied the vocals and dance.

The Candy Cane Chorus joined the Pyramid Players on stage and capped the event with rousing renditions of "Jingle Bell Rock," "Santa Claus Is Coming to Town," "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer" and "It Must Be Santa."

Rocking and a Ringing was performed for enthusiastic audiences at three wing performances Dec. 13-15 and at the official show for family and friends on December 16.

Pieces of a Dream at Pyramid

In October, the Players presented a community show titled *Pieces of a Dream* at the University of Tampa. (Visit www.pyramidinc.org, click Newsletters, then Tampa to read the story.) The Players took their show back to Pyramid in November for three performances for their peers.

"Community performances are always great, and it was especially fun to entertain our Pyramid friends," says singer **Jessica Cikovic**.

New Woodworking Shop is a Big Hit

By **Meghan Hogan**
Program Coordinator

Take a new student with a flair for working with his hands, a renovated room, tools, wood and our building superintendent. Add them all together, and Will's Workshop is born.

Student **Tom Shattuck** came to Pyramid with a background in landscaping and a variety of janitorial, drawing and maintenance skills. He also had an ability to work with wood.

A basic Pyramid fact is that our students teach us new things and inspire us every day to take the next step. After a little discussion and much enthusiasm, Pyramid's building



Students display their projects.

superintendent **Will Robinson** began to transform an unused room into a top notch workshop with tools and safety equipment.

Will's Workshop held its first class in early February with charter members Mr. Shattuck, **Eric Nelson and Stephen Genuardi**.

The class meets every Wednesday and has been joined by **Ryan Curlis, Stephen Gelsinger, Jordan Lester, Marty Noller and Tim Turner**.

“We made pegboards for sensory stimulation classes as our first project,” Mr. Robinson said. “The students were careful, diligent, paid close attention and they had a lot of fun!”

The second project was a series of planter boxes for the gardening classes, which were also painted by Pyramid art students.

“I really like the class,” says Mr. Shattuck. “It feels good to work with my hands.”

Much Tail Wagging and Unconditional Love

It's Wednesday at Pyramid. Our special volunteers arrive. Within seconds, happy shouts echo throughout the halls. The Canines for Christ team has arrived!

An outreach ministry of Van Dyke Church in Lutz, Canines for Christ has been visiting Pyramid Tampa for nearly two years bringing unconditional love to our students, along with lots of face licking and tail wagging.

Chaplain **Larry Randolph** is the team leader along with **Gracie**, his silver Labrador retriever. This week, Mr. Randolph brought something extra for Pyramid from Van Dyke Church, a check for \$1,000—an extremely welcome gift in these difficult economic times! Mr. Randolph said it was “A gift from God for His special children.”

Many thanks to Canines for Christ and to Van Dyke

Church for their generous gift.



Larry Randolph and Gracie

Talented Musician Named Coordinator

Students, families and friends are pleased to welcome back former Pyramid music teacher **Rick Kopituk** as a Program Coordinator.

Mr. Kopituk earned a BA in music in 1991, and an MA in sacred music in 1996.

Previously, the focus of his career has been serving churches as a minister of music. It was in this field that he



Mr. Kopituk

learned how to seek out and develop people's talents. In 2009, Mr. Kopituk became a music teacher at Pyramid and the attraction was immediate and mutual. He served in that capacity for a year.

Constantly amazed at the high level of talent at Pyramid, Mr. Kopituk says he is truly thankful for the opportunity to continue serving the students here.

"I believe that with students inspiring staff even as staff inspire students, the possibilities are endless," he says. "I'm very excited about all the potential for great things at Pyramid Tampa."



KASEY'S SIXTH ANNUAL GOLF TOURNAMENT



Sunday, April 17, 2011
11:45 a.m. Registration
1:00 p.m. Shotgun Start

Summerfield Crossings Golf Club

13050 Summerfield Boulevard
Riverview, FL 33569
813-671-3311
www.summerfieldgc.com

Here is how you can support Pyramid

Cart Sign	\$ 50
Tee Sign	\$100
Silver Sponsor	\$150
<i>(Tee & Cart Sign)</i>	
Gold Sponsor	\$400
<i>(Foursome, Tee Sign, proximity marker sign)</i>	
Donation	Your comfort level

**PLEASE MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO:
PYRAMID, INC.**

To become a sponsor or donor, contact Keith LaPlant at 813-928-2734 or kgobucs1@verizon.net. Or, contact Jessica Sturgeon at Pyramid, 813-931-3986 or jsturgeon@pyramidinc.org.

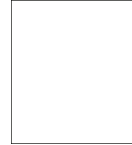
Please provide your name or company name, phone number and address as you want it to appear on your sign. Send your check and information to Keith LaPlant, 1509 Booth Dr., Valrico, FL 33594.

Pyramid Tampa
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 Tampa, FL 33604
 Phone: 813-931-3986

Andrea Thornley, Director
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www.pyramidinc.org

We believe in what we do.
 We make a difference.



COMING UP

March 31	Thursday	Pancake Breakfast fundraiser, 7-9:30 a.m. at Pyramid. \$5 donation. Call Pyramid, 813-931-3986 for details.
April 17	Sunday	Kasey's Golf Tournament, 1-5 p.m., Summerfield Crossings Golf Club, Riverview, FL (see page 7).
April 19	Tuesday	Easter Basket Raffle drawing at Pyramid, 1 p.m. \$1 per ticket. Call Pyramid, 813-931-3986, to purchase tickets.
May 22	Sunday	Blessed Spring Tea with Pyramid Players, 2 p.m., at Christ the King Catholic Church, 821 S. Dale Mabry, Tampa. \$10 donation. Call Terry Cone at Pyramid, 813-931-3986 for reservations.
May 30	Monday	Memorial Day, Pyramid closed.
June 3-5	Fri-Sun	Family Cafe and Governor's Summit on Disabilities with the Pyramid Players, Disney's Coronado Springs Hotel, Lake Buena Vista, FL.
June 24	Friday	Open House at Pyramid, 6-9 p.m., art exhibit and performance.
July 4	Monday	Independence Day, Pyramid closed.
July 23	Saturday	Hillsborough County Disability Awareness Day, 10 a.m. -2 p.m., Museum of Science & Industry, 4801 E. Fowler Ave., Tampa.