

## A Proposal:

### Fiddles, Reeds, and Brass for Kids

Summary of the Project I would like to set up a foundation or non-profit corporation of some kind to collect donated musical instruments, restore them, and place them in the hands of promising students in the New Haven area. Donors would receive a tax benefit, the gratitude of students, and the satisfaction of having helped a worthy cause. Well-motivated students who otherwise could not own an instrument would receive practical support as well as invaluable encouragement.

Precedents? There are other programs that provide donated musical instruments to students, but I haven't found one yet that would do precisely what I have in mind in New Haven. Ray Carlsen, from our own Yale Class of '57, has established the **Carlsen Cello Foundation** "to loan high-quality instruments to students who have demonstrated drive and talent but whose family cannot afford to provide them with the cello they deserve." The **Instruments for World Foundation** collects instruments and monetary donations used to restore the instruments and ship them to music schools abroad. **Central Vermont Share the Music, Inc.**, is a non-profit group that runs an annual used musical instrument sale; this program facilitates the sale of unused musical instruments, and profits are awarded to Vermont residents as music scholarships. **Oneo Memorial Musical Instrument Rescue** encourages people to donate unwanted instruments, refurbishes them, and donates them to talented and "at risk" kids. Based in Benicia, California, **Oneo** best resembles what I propose.

Would the Project Respond to a Real Need? I would like your judgment on this question. I suspect, however, that a real need does exist with respect to potential donors as well as the student beneficiaries. Instruments played long ago in school bands often end up unused in attics, and many of their owners would welcome an opportunity to pass them on to a younger generation. While affluent families need no special assistance to provide instruments for their children, families with limited financial resources might welcome the gift of a trumpet for their child – especially if the gift were accompanied by public recognition of the child's progress to date and future promise.

How Would the Foundation or Company Function ? Again, I look forward to hearing your suggestions. Here are a few ideas:

1. I would form a planning committee to help decide how to proceed. We would need legal advice concerning what kind of organization to establish.

2. I would try to work with one or two schools at first. In consultation with instrumental music teachers and principals, we would identify students who would benefit and the instruments they would need.
3. How to encourage donations of instruments? A mailing to Yale Band Alumni might give us a start. If this project from the beginning had a clear Yale affiliation, we might be able to tap into Yale PR mailings. Eventually we would expand our donor field and set up a website.
4. Where would the instruments be kept as they awaited distribution? At first, in my house, which has a large unused basement.
5. How would we finance the refurbishing of instruments? I don't know yet. Some instruments would need no work, some would need minor repairs, and the rest would be assessed to determine whether the piece's value was worth the price of restoration. We might even consider selling instruments that have no "takers" to raise funds to refurbish instruments in demand. Finally, we could solicit donations from individuals, institutions, or corporations. In the beginning, in any case, I think that the budget for refurbishing would be modest.
6. Following through. We should use the program to help nurture good relationships: students should write thanks to the donors and be encouraged to keep in touch; donors should be invited to concerts and should receive periodic reports on the program as a whole.

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