

Artist residency program hosts second artist in Martin schools

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Palm City — Standing on stage in the cafeteria of Citrus Grove Elementary School, 15-year-old Chad Hoopes lifted his violin to his shoulder Tuesday and treated an audience of children to his rendition of Georg Philipp Telemann's "Fantasy No. 9."

"I really love getting young people like you guys interested in music," said Hoopes, an award-winning performer who has played performances with large-scale and international orchestras, to the more than 110 students seated at the cafeteria tables.

Hoopes was invited to the school as part of a new Artist Residency Program created by Stuart's Lyric Theatre and the Education Foundation of Martin County, a nonprofit that supports county schools. Hoopes was the second artist to participate in the program designed to encourage county youth to engage in the performing arts.

Lisa Rhodes, executive director of the Education Foundation, said she and Lyric Theatre Executive Director John Loesser are planning to bring more artists to students at schools. The Lyric Theatre bears the brunt of the financial responsibility for the program, and the Education Foundation plans the logistics and school curriculum.

The Artist Residency Program's first event was a week-long visit to the county by flutist Nestor Torres. Torres conducted three-day visits to five public schools and both Pine School campuses to perform and instruct students in music. He also invited about 30 high school students from a master class session to join him in part of his performance at the Lyric Theatre on Oct. 9.

The success of the Torres event encouraged the Lyric and Education Foundation to organize Chad's visit to Citrus Grove.

Loesser said he and the Education Foundation are discussing which artists to bring to the program next year. He said the program will probably schedule multiple single-day performances, like Hoopes', and a couple of week-long performances. Torres has already expressed interest in returning to the program, however, the organizers have not chosen performers yet.

In between musical pieces, Hoopes, first place winner of the 2008 Yehudi Menuhin International Violin Competition, spoke to students about the triumphs and challenges of being a young musician. The Ohio resident, who started learning to play the violin when he was age 4, told them of how he trained and rose to recognition.

Brenda Hoopes, Chad Hoopes' mother, told students that a 3-year-old Chad saw his older sisters playing violin and had tried to snatch the instruments.

So that Christmas, Santa Claus gave him one.

"My story to you guys is to chase your dreams as long as hard as you can," she said.

