FALL 2025 NEWSLETTER | ORCAS ISLAND

Music Advocacy Group





A foundational music program for K-12

In September, the elementary school shared exciting news—for the first time, 4th graders will join band or strings and learn to play an instrument in school. MAG contributed funds, with grant support from Holiday GiveOrcas and Classics for Kids, to purchase 11 new musical instruments to help keep music education accessible for families. Your generosity made this possible!

This year, 292 students will benefit from music classes at the public school. K-3rd graders learn general music, bucket drumming, and play recorders or ukuleles. Starting in 4th grade, students select an instrument to focus on. In high school, participation in band, strings and mariachi programs will earn academic credits that count towards the Arts requirement for graduation.

Learning music hones focus, self-confidence, persistence, and creativity. With your help, MAG's support keeps the drumbeat of school music strong!







State competitions, honor bands & invitationals

Orcas students win regional music awards consistently. At a strings festival last school year, 7th/8th strings received a 1+ rating, the second-highest score among 15 competing schools. At the American String Teachers Association contest, HS strings received an 'Excellent' rating (Silver award). The HS band achieved a 'Superior' rating at the SJMEA Senior Band Festival.

This year, students will travel to 10 regional and 8 state contests, including:

- SJMEA Senior & Junior Honor Band & Strings Competitions
- SJMEA Solo/Ensemble adjudicated events
- ASTA State Strings contests
- WMEA All-State Band & Strings contests
- PLU Northwest Honor Band

School music by the numbers

- **125** in K-3 general music & bucket drumming
- **167** in band, strings & mariachi
- **2** incredible teachers!



New band instruments

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Elementary students in concert

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MakeMusic Cloud elevates music learning



MAG pays annual software license fees for 7th-12th grade musicians to use this digital platform for individual practice and play tests. In use since 2020, the app gives immediate feedback when learning parts, freeing teachers to do more in class. The music teachers are exploring ways for elementary students to access this fun, innovative tool.

OIHS Band Alumni: Justin Krisch-Derr

He played the clarinet in school here from 8th-12th grade, and learned guitar skills along the way. Now in his third year at Western Washington University, Justin is double-majoring in Music & Marine Science. He says, "Music is a universal language and is something that can bring people together, both strangers and friends." Catch Justin perform on Orcas during his breaks!



Justin (center) with WWU Guitar Ensemble

Kids' Chorus uplifts young voices through song



Now in its third year, this after-school program for ages 6-12, under the direction of Mary Wachter, is funded by MAG and the Funhouse Commons. Watch for performances at the Choral Society Pre-Concert in the Orcas Center Madrona Room, the Eastsound Tree-lighting, and various pop-ups.

School Music Benefit: Sunday, March 29, 2026

SAVE THE DATE for our annual inter-generational concert of student and community musicians united for a great cause. MAG is grateful to Orcas Island Community Band, Choral Society Ensemble, Orcas Youth Chorus, and Turtleback Brass for sharing their talents this past spring. Please join us on March 29 to support the indelible power of school music.



Class of 2025 seniors awarded letters for 4 years of varsity music

2025/2026 concerts



Nov. 10	Veterans Day Assembly
Dec. 4	4th-8th Winter Concert
Dec. 18	HS Band & Strings Winter Concert
Jan. 22	Elementary Concert
Mar. 29	**MAG School Music Benefit**
May 21	4th-12th Band Concert
May 28	4th-12th Strings Concert
June 4	Elementary Concert
June 13	High School Graduation



K-3 & Montessori bucket drumming

Music Student of the Month

Thank you to the local businesses that sponsor this series honoring student musicians nominated by their teachers.

Your support made a difference in the 2024/2025 school year

Thanks to your generosity, MAG contributed over $44,500 to music education for Orcas students, funding essential supplies like music scores, instrument access, technology solutions and transformative musical experiences.

General Music Fund

- For band: a baritone saxophone, 3 F-attachment trombones, a double French horn, marching drum cases, as well as mouthpieces and ligatures
- For strings: 3 violins, 2 violas, a double bass and a string bass storage rack
- Registration fees and transportation to off-island solo/ensemble and group competitions

Joyce Burghardt Excellence in Music Fund

- Grants for students traveling to auditioned events like PLU Honor Band and WMEA conferences
- Teacher training at the summer 2025 National Mariachi Conference to launch the school's mariachi program.
- Annual software license fees for essential music practice software used by strings and band students