

History of Scholarship/Education Committee

Southwest Florida Symphony Society

Several years ago there were quite a few members of the Symphony Society on the Symphony's Education Committee. At one of the meetings in 2008, it was discussed that the amount of money we were giving for the scholarships had been diminished in value due to inflation and that it could no longer cover the cost of the summer programs that the students wanted to attend. Several ideas follow and one was that the members of the Society be asked if they would be interested in contributing to a scholarship fund to help augment that which was being given at the time.

At the next Society board meeting, the idea was presented and accepted by the board. It was decided that when the membership renewal forms were distributed that year there would be a line for the members to contribute to a Society Scholarship fund if they so desired. It did not make it on to the form that spring but it did the following year and the subsequent years that have followed. A small committee that year to discuss parameters but nothing was finalized at that time since there was no funds as yet.

As the money built up in the Society scholarship fund, the Symphony board found that it was not in a position financially to fund the buses to bring the students into Barbara Mann for the annual concert by the Symphony Orchestra, one of the Symphony Education programs. They turned to the Society for help and the Society board at the time decided to use some of the Scholarship funds to cover these expenses. Hence the name of the Society fund Education/Scholarship. That request came two years in a row and then two years ago a student from FGCU approached the board of the Society and asked if there were any scholarship funds available that he might apply for and subsequently he was awarded \$2000 from the fund for a summer program. Leif Bjaland who was present at that meeting suggested that it was a great opportunity for the members of the Society to contribute matching funds and he led that way and the members generously followed and he was given enough money to cover his entire summer musical education experience.

Still however, the Society had not put in place the final parameters for others to apply for this scholarship money.

Last year a committee was put in place to do just that and this fall the committee sent out a letter of explanation and notification of the scholarships to area music educators in our five county area. We were able to offer 3 \$2000 scholarships to deserving music students to be used for their musical education. The letter of explanation and a form for students to fill out was also put on our website. Twenty high school and college students applied and our judges selected thirteen for the finals. Three very talented students were selected and when they have been accepted into the program of their choice, the money will be sent to that program.

The Society however continues to get requests to help the Symphony Support their Education programs and in 2015 we will have given \$1000 to be a sponsor for one of the Youth Orchestra's concerts. Our main focus for this fund still remains to give scholarships to talented students to support their musical education.

Hope this short history helps to explain our use of these funds and again we thank our members for their generous support of this project for our area youth.

2015 - SWFLSS = Education=Scholarship History