



## **Katie Wu Earns Gold Award with Project, “Let the Music Speak!”**

*Newbury Park Girl Scout gives free piano lessons to children from low-income families*

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While music is a great way to help people gain confidence and express themselves, Katie recognized that not everyone has the opportunity to learn a new instrument due to cost and lack of resources. In the middle of a pandemic, Katie found a way to provide kids who might normally not have the opportunity to participate in music programs the chance to tap into their creative side.

“Oftentimes, underprivileged kids feel left out because they are unable to have the same opportunities as others, such as playing instruments,” Katie said. “Time commitment and the cost of pianos and lessons can be big issues for families, so many children don’t have the chance to play. Additionally, COVID-19 has limited the exposure that kids have to music skills through activities such as music classes, especially since everything shifted online.”

She began by reaching out to local organizations that serve children in need, including Many Mansions, James Storehouse, and Child Hope Services to recruit participants. To fundraise for supplies, Katie sewed themed facemasks that she sold to her community. Keyboard Concepts, a piano store in Los Angeles, agreed to donate six 61-key keyboards, stands, and benches for her project.

With the funds from her mask sales, Katie purchased different beginner-level piano books for her future students. Her recruitment efforts through nonprofit organizations and word of mouth were successful, and she sent out a sign-up sheet to parents where they could select their desired date and lesson time. Katie delivered the keyboards and supplies to each participant’s house before the start of her virtual program.

Katie used preparatory Beginner Piano Lesson books to develop her lesson plans and created tasks for each meeting. To track their progress throughout the program, each



student filled out a “before lessons” survey to see how much their skills improved. The students also received handmade flashcards with piano notes that Katie created to help them memorize key placement on the keyboards.

After setting up her tripod and streaming devices, Katie would prepare to lead three 45-minute virtual lessons over Zoom each day. Her students learned seating and hand placement, playing the black keys, and note recognition. Katie sent out the students’ homework at the end of their lessons to help them prepare for the next meeting and practice during the week. Because everyone learns at a different pace, she created personalized Quizlets, or digital flashcards, for her students to track their progress and learn the notes.

In total, Katie taught six students over the course of her program, with most of them completing their lesson books. By meeting with Katie weekly, they improved their musicality, explored their creativity, and reported a greater appreciation for music. “Teaching kids how to play the keyboard can help them develop confidence in themselves and explore their creativity,” Katie said.

She reached out to a local Boys and Girls Club to explain her project, and ended up donating the keyboards, benches, stands, and lesson materials to the after-school program so that even more kids would have the opportunity to learn a musical instrument. “Young kids that are a part of the Boys and Girls Club will be able to experiment with the piano and learn how to play and express themselves through music,” Katie said.

Katie says that through the challenges of the pandemic, she learned a lot about her leadership skills and perseverance while finishing her project. “It was definitely a juggling act of getting donations and sending out my flyer to families...I was worried no one would sign up. It took trust to wait and see, and in the end, everything turned out the best that it could have. Working with all of the kids was an absolute honor. They were all amazing, and they reaffirmed my desire to work with kids in my future career.”

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