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Schoolhouse rock: Band aids music program

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MERIDEN — When Geo Filippides enrolled in the Parent Leadership Training Institute class, he had no idea where it would lead. The path took him to raising \$1,200 for the Benjamin Franklin School music program.

The class, which runs for 20 weeks, requires that all participants do a community service project involving children and the community. Filippides gravitated toward mu-

sic.

He got together with a group of friends with whom he regularly plays in a band, and they agreed to help with his project.

"I have friends with big hearts," he said.

Ben Franklin was chosen because his daughter attends the school. Filippides first ran the idea by Principal Dan Coffey in March. He was thrilled with the proposal.

It "blossomed from there," Filippides said.

The guitarist next met with his

bandmates to decide on what kind of music they would perform. They chose 55 Beatles songs, from classic hits to the obscure.

"We pulled out a lot of curveballs," Filippides said of the song choices.

The band had a preview night at Franklin and everyone was receptive to Filippides' project. When the band performed May 5 at Augusta Curtis Cultural Center, it was a full house. He was able to get sponsors for beverage and food.

In one night, Filippides raised

\$1,200 for the music program and he was shocked.

"This was my first attempt at something like this," he said.

The band decided to call itself Number Nine, after a Beatles song, "Revolution No. 9." "We take ourselves seriously, with arrangements especially. We've moved onto other ideas," he said. But "we're not looking to go out on the road or make an album."

Coffey plans on making that money available to low-income children who want to play an instrument. "A

lot of people think it's a great thing for school, but many don't have a lot of money and are often live month to month. It's a luxury, a want not a need," Coffey said of instrumental music.

Coffey is hoping to waive the \$50 fee for low-income students. "This money is so appreciated," he said.

Coffey realized the impact this could have on students for the rest of their lives. Filippides "was passionate, into it. He went above and

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beyond, helping with children in not only the school, but the community as well," Coffey said.

The Parent Leadership Training Institute, which began in 1998 and is a part of the city's Children First Initiative, helps parents understand the democratic process so they can be better advocates for their children. Parents must apply to the program and be chosen by a selection committee.

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