

Head Start pre-school students 'rock out' at fun sessions led by West Haven's *The Rock House School of Music*

(West Haven, CT 8-12-16) The Rock House School of Music met Head Staff program children and staff members on Tuesday, August 9, in what turned out to be two rousing sessions of learning about tempo, beat, rhythm and rhyme for the 3- and 4-year-old The West Haven Community House preschoolers.

Among the highlights was when the youngsters took turns strumming ukuleles and guitars, beating on drums and fingering the electric organ keyboard guided by Rock House founder John McCarthy, who led the presentation, "Clap, Tap, Sing."



Assisted by his son and daughter, Johnny and Melody, McCarthy started off by asking his captive audience, "Who likes to sing?" that was affirmatively acknowledged by all. Quick renditions of "Happy Birthday" and "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star" followed.

"Music is a lot like counting – one, two, three, four ..." McCarthy told them, and then had the boys and girls clap their hands, tap their feet and nod their heads while counting to the beat.



"Drums are the backbone of the beat," he said, as Melody demonstrated several percussion sounds, while the children took turns tapping with their feet to the beat of the drum while counting to four. Then, they combined feet tapping with clapping and counting.

"Tap-clap ... tap-clap ... tap-clap," and then music was added for emphasis. "You guys are doing real good," he encouraged, "You're got good rhythm!"

The popular rock group Queen's song, "We Will Rock You," was then played to demonstrate a "pause," as in, "tap-tap-clap-pause ... tap-tap-clap-pause – but no sleeping!" he deadpanned to giggles from the boys and girls. The youthful groups were then asked, "Who knows about rhyming?" with McCarthy leading a routine that included "hat, cat, bat" and "ball, fall and tall," among other simple rhymes.

The use of "body clocks" was then demonstrated - to the sound of the Monkees' popular '60s hit, "I'm a Believer." Children were instructed to stand up "to learn how to move your body, arms and legs to music," and adding a "head bob" and jumping up and down in for good measure.

These were then enthusiastically practiced by all the children on the "dance floor." It was then time to play some instruments. "Who wants to play a ukulele?" McCarthy asked. "Hold it this way and strum downward," he told half a dozen future ukulele rockers. "Who wants to play the drums?" he then asked. (Who doesn't?)

Children took turns strumming the ukulele and guitar on hand to the octave notes, "do, re, me ..." and then reversed, "... me, re, do," and on the snare and bass drums to various beats with Melody. There was quite a long line of children waiting to take a turn at the electronic organ keyboard, too.

All in all, it was a very instructive and fun 45 minutes each for the two groups of students, four classrooms that comprise the summer Head Start program at the Community House.

Thank you, Rock House School of Music!