Empower a child through music

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Lead Guitar

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Music Mentorship Empowerment

2026 ANNUAL REPORT

Lead Guitar

Our Mission & Vision

Lead Guitar's **MISSION** is to improve student grades, graduation rates, resilience and life skills by delivering free in-school guitar programs to kids facing significant socioeconomic challenges or other barriers to experiencing the transformative power of making music.

Our **VISION** is that every learner of every ability and background has access to engaging, relevant music education in their neighborhood school, and contributes to a culture of music making and mentorship that ripples through their community.

"[Lead Guitar shows] tangibly better student outcomes in terms of dropout rates, behavioral issues and academic achievement."

– U.S. News & World Report

Platinum Transparency 2026

Candid.

What's this? Candid (GuideStar) is a database of IRS-recognized nonprofits. A Platinum Seal of Transparency is the highest seal attainable and it demonstrates Lead Guitar's commitment to transparency of information sharing with potential donors and funders.

Lead Guitar's Four Pillars of Service

CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION AND CURRICULUM

Year-round instruction is delivered by our international team of Teaching Artists using Lead Guitar's proprietary method endorsed by institutions like the University of Southern California.

ACCREDITED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

We build sustainability over years by training teachers employed at our partner schools to play and teach guitar.

IN-SCHOOL ASSEMBLIES

Live concerts and our interactive *We Are Guitar* broadcasts connect global touring artists with students in some of the nation's most under-resourced schools.

STUDENT PERFORMANCES

Participants are invited to local college campuses to perform for friends and family, empowering students who may be the first in their family to attend university.



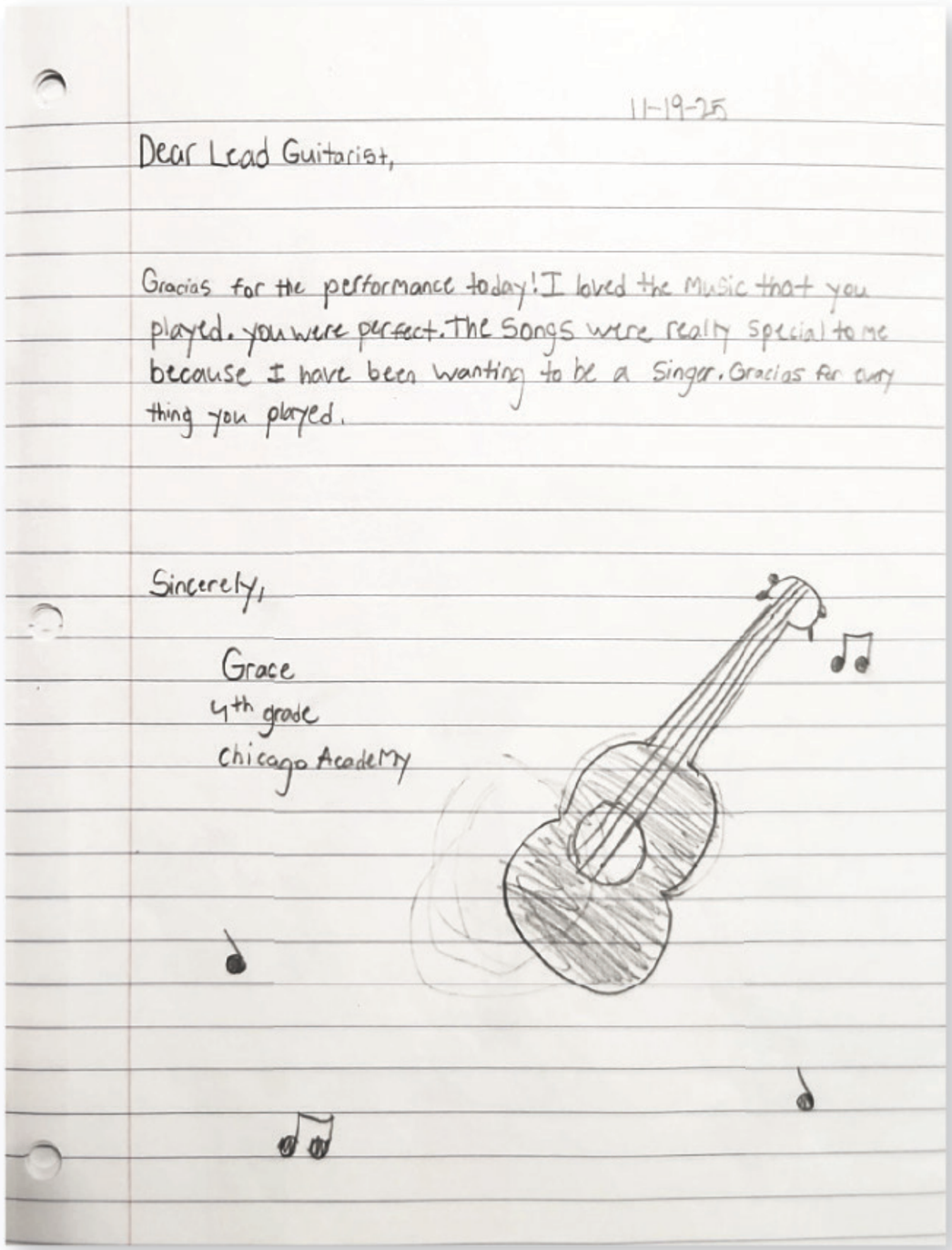
Letter from the Director

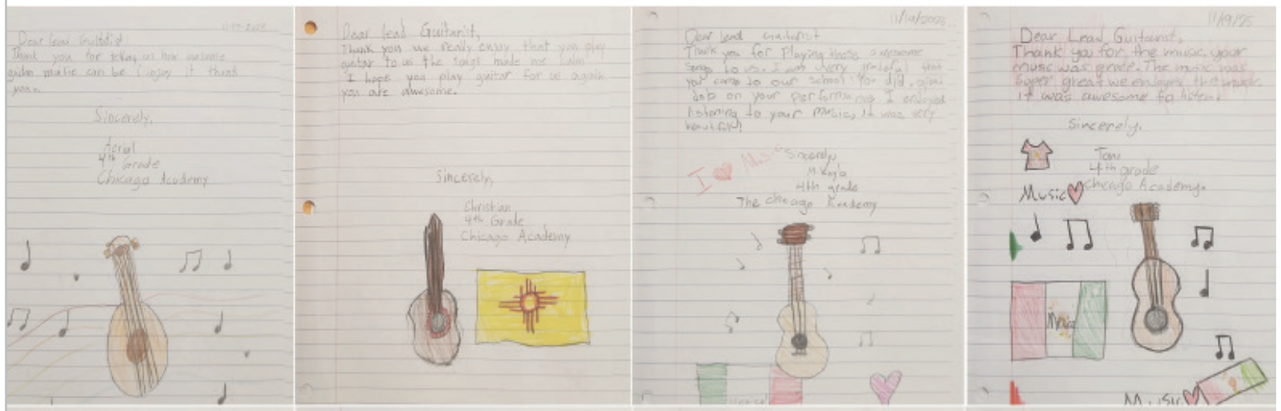
Every year, I have the opportunity to travel to the cities where we operate, and celebrate the students, teachers, artists, and community partners who are making great things happen through Lead Guitar programs across the U.S. This year, I made it to at least one school in every Lead Guitar city. I even taught a class myself for the first time in about ten years, filling in for our Teaching Artist at Valencia Middle School in Tucson. Everywhere I went, I saw Lead Guitar Teaching Artists meeting students where they are and taking learning beyond the classroom.

At Burney-Harris-Lyons Middle School in Athens, GA, I watched Teaching Artist Juan Felipe Avila Dallos rehearse students ahead of their performance at Carnegie Hall. At Maryvale High School in Phoenix, students rose to the occasion in a masterclass with Royal Conservatory of Brussels Professor Antigoni Goni and her Volterra Project Trio. In Chicago, I was moved to learn that 11-year Lead Guitar veteran Zhivko Nikolov had learned Spanish to better connect with English Language Learners at Mosaic Elementary School. And at our Showcase Concert at VanderCook College, I marveled at the sight and sound of 269 students performing together and celebrating with a pizza party.

What I witnessed in those classrooms and concert halls is borne out by the data we have collected over the last four years and share in detail on page 6. It shows that Lead Guitar is accomplishing its mission and fulfilling its vision. More than 7,000 students each year are strengthening their focus, engagement, teamwork, and resilience through music. The data also shows that their enthusiasm extends beyond the classroom, creating a ripple effect that spreads the transformative power of making music through their schools, families, and communities.

Brad Richter
Executive Director





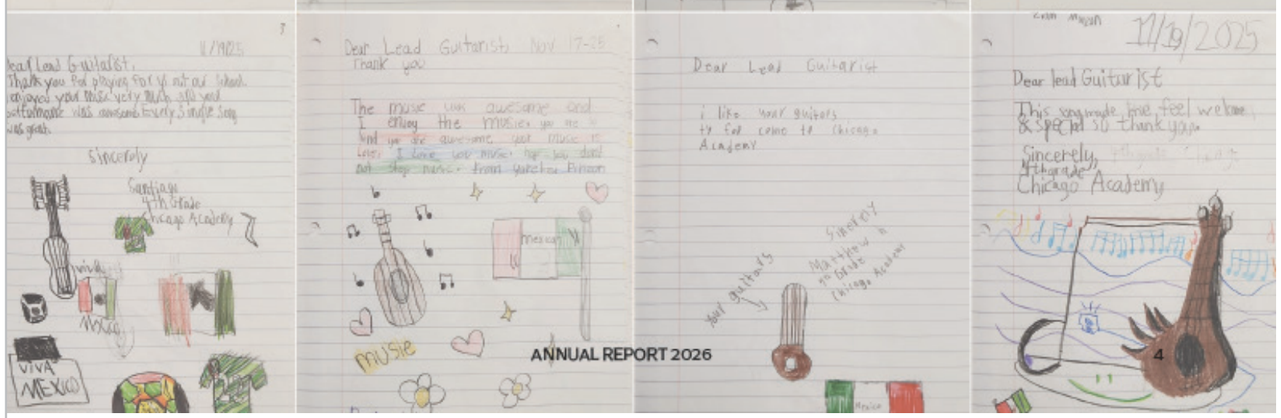
Note from the Board of Directors

Seeing our students excel and take pride in their many accomplishments fills me with gratitude for the countless givers and advisors who have helped build Lead Guitar into what it is today: an efficient and sustainable organization that consistently rises to meet the ever-increasing demand for our services in underserved schools nationwide.

That gratitude strengthens our resolve to be excellent stewards of your investments of time, treasure, and talent in this worthy cause. To that end, we have ended the last six fiscal years with an operating surplus, earned Guide Star's Platinum Seal for Transparency (again!) and successfully completed the goals outlined in our FY24-FY26 Strategic Plan. Central to that work was ensuring the financial footing necessary to sustain the organization at its new, larger scale, including establishing 180 days of operating reserves. We also strengthened Board representation by adding members in Atlanta and Los Angeles, improved our curriculum and marketing materials, and upgraded critical organizational infrastructure, including our HR, CRM, and accounting systems. Together, these accomplishments position Lead Guitar for its next phase of growth.

As a board, we are committed to doing our part to ensure that every learner of every ability and background has access to music education in their neighborhood school—and to bringing opportunities like those you'll read about in this report to more students every year.

Marc Sandroff
Board President



Outcomes

84% of Lead Guitar participants were designated as "low-income" by their school

In 2025-26, Lead Guitar...

Taught **6,528** students year-round through **236** daily to twice-weekly classes at **94** schools in Atlanta, Chicago, Detroit, Los Angeles, Phoenix and Tucson; trained **105** schoolteachers; and reached **52,256** additional students and community members through events.

Over the last four years, Lead Guitar has served 28,120 students, an average of 7,030 per year, through daily to twice-weekly guitar classes.



Breaking down events:

16,766* attended in-school student performances, Guest Artist Assemblies, or Student Showcase Concerts on the campuses of our local university partners

35,480 viewers saw Lead Guitar students perform on our *We Are Guitar* episodes and Virtual Guitar Ensembles on YouTube

** 37% of LG partner schools did not report their in-school audience numbers, making the likely total of all audience members several thousand higher than what is reported here*

Approximately **2,432** additional students at **32** schools (not counted in the numbers above) studied guitar in Lead Guitar Legacy Programs. A Legacy Program is a school where Lead Guitar started guitar classes many years ago that now operate completely independently.

Four Years of Remarkable Impacts

What Changed for the Students Who Participated?

Over the last four years, Lead Guitar has used a survey and observational assessment created in alignment with ASU Lodestar Social Impact Measurement guidance. We have shared yearly data from those assessments in our previous three Annual Reports. For FY26, we are excited to share the averaged results of those assessments, completed by 215 participating schoolteachers from the 2022-23 school year through the present. Taken as a group, they show remarkably consistent positive impacts over time in skills that are essential for learning, living, and working.

Participating schoolteachers reported that their partnership with Lead Guitar contributed to the growth of their students, including in the following ways:

93.5% saw improvement in student focus and engagement
91.8% reported growth in students' resilience in overcoming obstacles or challenges
78.5% saw a reduction in incidents of adverse behavior among students
94.3% witnessed growth in students' ability to collaborate and work as a team
98% saw students offering to help a struggling classmate

Speaking to the ripple effect of learning that extends beyond the Lead Guitar classroom: **77.4%** "frequently" or "sometimes" witnessed students teaching others guitar outside class.

And finally, as teacher retention is an issue of nationwide concern, this finding is particularly noteworthy: **94.5%** reported that their partnership with Lead Guitar positively affects their potential longevity as an educator.



Having analyzed data collected over the past year from a large, diverse, and dynamic population of students and teachers participating in Lead Guitar programs, we saw a pervasive positive influence on classroom learning activities and on teaching.

– Dr. J. David Betts (Professor Emeritus of the University of Arizona College of Education and Past-president of the Arts and Learning SIG of the American Educational Research Association) as cited in, "The Report on Whole-Child Benefits of Lead Guitar"



Inside the Classroom

Direct instruction of students by Lead Guitar Teaching Artists is our core service. It's an opportunity for students to learn from some of the most expert guitar instructors in the nation. Lead Guitar Teaching Artists are also patient mentors and engaged listeners, providing a chance for kids to rewrite their narratives with an adult who is there for them every week, all year long, for up to four consecutive years.

But what a Lead Guitar Teaching Artist brings to the equation is only half the story. Every Lead Guitar class pairs a Teaching Artist with a certified schoolteacher who is learning to play and teach guitar while co-teaching guitar classes. Lead Guitar's partner teachers bring a separate and complimentary set of skills to the mix, including classroom management and deeper community knowledge that strengthens all aspects of learning.

The Teaching Artist leads instruction for each class once per week, introducing new concepts and new songs and providing a model for their partnering schoolteacher to use in leading class the other 1-4 times per week class occurs (depending on grade level). Schoolteachers also use Lead Guitar's curriculum and online learning platform to help guide their instruction and stratify student learning on the days they teach independently.

Veteran Teaching Artist Zhivko Nikolov, pictured above leading a Chicago Public School classroom, has been with Lead Guitar since 2016.

"Zhivko has had a deeply positive impact on our guitar classes, particularly in building student confidence and engagement. One notable example involves a student whose primary language is Spanish. Prior to working with Zhivko, she appeared disengaged and uncertain about her ability in guitar class. When Zhivko took the time to speak with her in her native language, it immediately created a sense of comfort, trust, and belonging. That simple but intentional act led to a complete turnaround in her attitude. She became more motivated, participated more actively in class, and showed renewed interest in learning the guitar. This moment highlighted Zhivko's cultural responsiveness, empathy, and ability to connect with students on a human level. His approach not only improved one student's experience but also positively influenced the classroom environment by reinforcing inclusivity and student-centered learning."

– High School Teacher, Chicago

Professional Development for Schoolteachers

Beyond the co-teaching experience, Lead Guitar provides formal guitar playing and pedagogy training for schoolteachers outside of class time through our accredited workshops. This work builds long-term sustainability in the programs we establish by empowering schoolteachers to teach guitar independently and with confidence.



Los Angeles Teaching Artist Doris Cosic (left) works one-on-one with an LAUSD teacher at the 2026 Teachers Workshop.



Watch Singiza's full interview and solo performance by scanning the code!

"I can do things that I didn't know I could do."

Student Spotlight: Singiza Banganyigabo

We sat down with Phoenix student Singiza Banganyigabo to hear first-hand how the Lead Guitar program has impacted his life, including his recent acceptance to study classical guitar at Arizona State University where he was awarded a full-ride scholarship.

Tell us about yourself: where you're from, how long you've been playing, and your favorite thing about guitar.

My name is Singiza, and I'm from Uganda and I moved to the United States when I was about 8 years old, and now I've been playing for about 2 years.

The thing I love most about playing guitar is that I can kind of isolate myself from everything and, as I'm playing, I don't think of anything else but playing. And like… it just… playing guitar just comes with freedom, I guess, from the world.

How has participating in Lead Guitar changed your attitude towards school and learning?

Learning how to play the guitar has taught me that I can do things as long as I put time and effort into it. My attitude towards school was not that great. My plan before high school was probably to just drop out and join the military. But then, after I got into guitar, I began to look at it (school) as a privilege. And that's something that's helped me. And ever since then, I've taken school serious. My grades before guitar were poor, and then after I transitioned over to music they got better and I started focusing more.

Was there a moment or an event in your experience with Lead Guitar that you found particularly inspiring?

The Lead Guitar program brought Marko Topchii – a Ukrainian guitarist, fantastic player – to Maryvale and he played a few pieces for our class, and I was just sitting there in the audience thinking, "Wow, is this guy even human?" And then, in my mind, I was like, "I want to be like that." And ever since then, I've practiced hours and hours, and it's really paid off. And it's all thanks to the Lead Guitar program.

What has learning to play the guitar taught you about yourself?

My success with the guitar has taught me that I can do things that I didn't know I could do. And it's also made me realize that I can succeed at a university level, because if I put my mind on something – and I put time and effort and I try – I can succeed.





In-School Assemblies

Lead Guitar's in-school assemblies and *We Are Guitar* broadcasts offer experiential learning opportunities for our students and provide access for tens of thousands of additional students and community members to music-making of the highest caliber each year. Guest Artists in 2025-26 included **Iván Reséndiz**, **Ryan Ayers**, and **The Volterra Project Trio** who gave an unforgettable masterclass at Maryvale High School in Phoenix. Scan the QR code below to watch!



"The invitation to attend the Lead Guitar Showcase was an incredibly inspiring experience for our students. Many students left feeling empowered to pursue a career in music, while others felt accomplished in performing on such a professional level."

– Elementary School Teacher, Los Angeles



Student Performances

Lead Guitar hosted Showcase Concerts at awe-inspiring venues across the U.S., including: The University of Southern California, The Aspen Music Festival and School's Harris Hall, Arizona State University, and The University of Georgia. The Showcase Concert at VanderCook College of Music in Chicago (pictured below) featured 269 student performers from across the city.



Finances

ASSETS

Total Bank Accounts	$	491,825.06
Accounts Receivable	$	140,395.00
Other Current Assets	$	1,874.55
Fixed Assets	$	386,414.45
TOTAL	**$**	**1,020,509.06**

LIABILITIES

Other Current Liabilities	$	10,000.00
Payroll Liabilities	$	0.00
TOTAL	**$**	**10,000.00**

EQUITY

Restricted Net Assets	$	0.00
Unrestricted Net Assets	$	687,125.59
Board Designated Assets	$	259,937.92
Net Revenue	$	63,445.55
TOTAL	**$**	**1,010,509.06**

INCOME

Foundation	$	398,100.00
Board	$	75,101.20
Corporate	$	25,000.00
Individual and Business	$	187,302.52
Fundraising Events	$	220,385.29
City/County/State Government	$	42,000.00
Federal Government	$	60,000.00
Collaborative School-Based Grants	$	23,210.00
In-Kind	$	2,832.00
Program Service Fees	$	5,490.00
Curriculum Sales	$	19,184.10
Interest Income	$	17,327.86
TOTAL	**$**	**1,075,932.97**

EXPENSES

Personnel	$	852,654.15
Fundraising/Development	$	74,069.81
Facilities and Equipment	$	10,251.62
Operations	$	35,402.50
Production and Events	$	10,251.62
Travel and Meetings	$	5,757.95
Curriculum Sales	$	19,737.18
Other	$	3,665.93
TOTAL	**$**	**1,012,487.42**

NET OPERATING REVENUE	**$**	**63,445.55**





"Beyond the musical skills they developed, I observed growth in perseverance, collaboration, and self-confidence. Seeing students take pride in their accomplishments and realize they were capable of learning an instrument was one of the most rewarding outcomes of the program."

– Elementary School Teacher, Chicago

Personnel expenses comprise most of Lead Guitar's budget because sending highly trained personnel into schools to teach guitar classes is our primary service.

Of the $852,654.15 in personnel expenses:

64% is for **Teaching Artists or Regional Directors** who do the work of visiting schools every day

22% is the portion of **administrative salaries dedicated to service delivery**. This covers essential work like supervising and training Teaching Artists, training school teachers, writing curriculum, and organizing student events

14% is for **operations or fundraising functions**

An independent accounting firm prepares Reviewed Financials for Lead Guitar annually and Audited Financials every third year. Write to us at **info@leadguitar.org** if you would like a copy.

Our Team: Donors, Supporters and Partners

*This list reflects donations made between July 1, 2025 - June 30, 2026. We strive to acknowledge donors accurately. Should you like to update your recognition preference, please contact **info@leadguitar.org**.*

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Steve Ward
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Michael and Teri Willemsen
Malery Williams
Jesse Wilson
John and Ginger Wohrman
Jim Wood
Dr. Palmer Wright
Tom and Sherri Wright
Mike Youngman

Our Team: Staff Members

To learn more about our staff members, you can **read their individual bios by scanning the QR code**!

Administrative Staff



Brad Richter
Executive Director & Co-Founder



Marina Jarrette
Director of Communications



Whitney Herr-Buchholz
Director of Operations



Nick Lenio
Director of Instruction

Regional Directors



Christian Cruz
Los Angeles



Andrew Smith
Phoenix



Jess Julian
Detroit



Nick Epple
Tucson



Denis Azabagic
Chicago



Dr. Daniel Bolshoy
Atlanta/Athens

Teaching Artists



Alejandro Acosta
Los Angeles



Dr. David Sewell
Phoenix



Dr. Onur Alakavuklar
Detroit



Doris Cosic
Los Angeles



Freddy Vazquez
Phoenix



Scott Walter
Detroit



Adrian Martinez
Los Angeles



Sara D'Ippolito
Chicago



Juan Felipe Avila Dallo
Atlanta/Athens



Erin Young
Los Angeles



Kacey Ellis
Chicago



Alfredo Fonseca
Atlanta/Athens



Facundo Martinez
Tucson



Zhivko Nikolov
Chicago



Tyler Jackson
Atlanta/Athens



Caleb Bailey
Phoenix



Ruben Portillo
Chicago



Ryan Moore
Atlanta/Athens



Ryan Roubison
Phoenix



Juan Rivera
Chicago



Hoberdan Peno
Atlanta/Athens



Derick Sears
Phoenix



Fabricio Lock Sotomayor
Chicago



James Terrell
Atlanta/Athens



Meet A Teaching Artist: Juan Felipe Avila Dallos

Before becoming a Lead Guitar Teaching Artist, Juan Felipe Avila Dallos was already an international concert artist, published composer/arranger, and professor at the National University in Columbia. Two years ago, he came to the U.S. as a Fulbright scholar to take part in a unique partnership between Lead Guitar and the University of Georgia: a work/study program through which gifted guitarists and pedagogues like Juan Felipe teach in neighborhood schools for Lead Guitar while earning a doctorate at UGA's Hugh Hodgson School of Music.

Dr. Daniel Bolshoy serves a dual role as Lead Guitar's Regional Director for Georgia and Professor of Guitar at UGA. He supervises Juan Felipe and three additional guitarist/scholars in both their Lead Guitar work and their doctoral studies. Lead Guitar provides a generous stipend, and UGA a full tuition waiver that allows these gifted Teaching Artists to lead guitar programs in Georgia schools while earning an advanced degree.

Juan Felipe describes his experience through the UGA/Lead Guitar partnership as challenging but very rewarding:

"Thanks to Lead Guitar and the University of Georgia, I have met wonderful people from whom I learn every day, both professionally and personally. I am also grateful for the immense empathy I have felt from Brad Richter, Dr. Bolshoy, and the entire LG team, as well as the schoolteachers I have worked with and the children we strive to educate.

I must say that I consider these schoolteachers silent heroes and role models. Despite the difficulty and how often their work is undervalued, they show up to their schools every day to ensure that – through music, discipline, and the solidarity it requires – future generations can become the protagonists of a better tomorrow.



LG students from Burney-Harris-Lyons Middle School rehearsing at Carnegie Hall.

In March, I was able to play alongside Lead Guitar students at Carnegie Hall in New York, that iconic auditorium where every musician dreams of playing. In other words, those kids made my dream come true!"

Our Team: Board Members



Dan Bueschel is currently CEO of Pueblo Mechanical, a mechanical contracting and services firm. Previous to his role at Pueblo Mechanical, Dan held the position of CEO North American Healthcare at Sodexo, a leading global healthcare services provider, and VPGM West at Johnson Controls. Dan credits music education with teaching him that teamwork, commitment, and a sense of accomplishment could be just as meaningful in his professional life. That said, Dan also maintains an active musical life as a gigging musician playing bass for the band Ankh Alien.



Carol H. Cunningham retired in 2014 after 40 years of experience as a civil engineer specializing in planning, licensing, and developing hydroelectric projects internationally. Carol holds a BS and MS in Civil Engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The last 14 years of her career, Carol lived and worked in the Philippines, where she founded Dam Good Stuff, Inc, a Fair Trade-certified company, which makes high-end fashion jewelry while providing livelihood opportunities for women and relocated families in the Philippines.



Doug DeClusin is the founder and former CEO of Sunland Asphalt & Construction, Inc., and has been awarded the Construction Executive of the Year (Construction Financial Management Association) and CEO of the Year (Phoenix Business Journal). Active in the construction and philanthropic worlds, Doug has been a member of the Associated General Contractors of America-Arizona Chapter since 2007 and supports the Boys and Girls Club, Horses Help, the Ronald McDonald charities, and ASU's Del E. Webb School of Construction in addition to Lead Guitar.



Glenn Howell, the owner of Howell Athletics, leverages his 28 years of experience to train athletes of all ages. His clientele ranges from middle and high school athletes to national champions and professional athletes, as well as general fitness clients. A University of Arizona Football Honorable Mention All-Pac-10 tight end, Glenn graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree. Currently, he is in his 15th year as co-host of the UA Football pre- and post-game radio broadcasts on Wildcats Radio 1290am. Beyond his athletic endeavors, Glenn is actively involved in service and philanthropy. He supports youth access to arts and athletics in Southern Arizona.



Haley Howell is a Software Engineer employed in the financial industry. She boasts a background as a former Division 1 collegiate athlete, having been named Setter of the Year in the MAAC Conference, Freshman Female Athlete of the Year at Siena College, and a winner of a MAAC Volleyball Championship in 2014. Excelling in both indoor volleyball and pursuing a 5th year of eligibility for beach volleyball at the University of San Francisco, her educational achievements include an undergraduate degree in economics, complemented by minors in computer science and information systems at Siena College. Additionally, Haley holds a Master's Degree in Health Informatics from the University of San Francisco.



Clint Mabie is an innovative manager with nearly 30 years of experience in the not-for-profit field. A Chicago native, Clint earned his MBA from Northwestern University and had multiple roles during his decade at The Chicago Community Trust. He recently retired after serving 10 years as President and CEO of the Community Foundation for Southern Arizona that connects donors to causes they care about. Clint also holds a M.A. in Education from National Louis University and taught in Chicago Public Schools.



Tim Miklaucic is the Founder and former CEO of Cordoba Music Group, a global manufacturer and distributor of guitars. He is the founder and current CEO of Guitar Salon International, one of the world's leading retailers of classical and flamenco guitars. In 2010 Tim founded the GSI Foundation to promote music education in underserved public schools. His other business activities include managing Vina Loriente, a winery and vineyard in Santa Ynez, California, and Illiakos, a Solar Energy Company.



A native Tucsonan, **Joe Millstone** taught science and math in the gifted and talented middle school program in TUSD for six years. In the mid-1980s, he became a commercial real estate broker with CB Richard Ellis and Grubb and Ellis for ten years apiece before becoming a consultant. In 2001, Joe earned the coveted CCIM Designation for Commercial Investment Real Estate. Joe maintains an active role in the Avanim Rock Band at Temple Emanu El in Tucson. Joe is a competitive swimmer, triathlete, and dedicated grandfather, splitting his time between Tucson and Los Angeles.



Diane Quevedo served as a teacher, Title I Project Assistant, and Elementary Principal for a total of 38 years in Tucson Unified School District. Schools included Safford, Carrillo, Drachman Primary Magnet, Grijalva, and Bloom, where, as principal, she partnered with Lead Guitar to pioneer a new model for the program: training all K–5 classroom teachers in the school to play and teach guitar to their own classes. Seeing Lead Guitar "put a smile on students' faces and hope in the hearts" inspired Diane to join the Lead Guitar board when she retired.



Marc Sandroff is co-founder & Chairman of the Board of Directors of Lead Guitar and Managing Director of Cadre Partners, LLC, an alternative investment and management services firm. In addition, Marc is Chairman of the Board of Directors of NexMetro Communities, LLC, a real estate multi-family development and operating concern. He also serves on the Board of a medical device Company and an international distributor of gourmet food items which serves big box stores and grocery chains.

Over the last 30 years, he has been involved with numerous entrepreneurial companies as President and a founding member of their management teams. Along the way, he has worked with over 70 operating companies, participated in more than 120 real estate ventures, and has consistently demonstrated his ability to fuel a company's growth and optimal performance. Marc credits his serious study of the classical guitar in his teens for building the determination and focus needed to become a successful businessman.

Our Team: Board Members (cont.)



Jeff Sater graduated from Indiana University with a degree in Business and minors in Geology and Music. Jeff entered the family business in oil and gas, real estate, and stock market investments, ultimately taking over in 2008 and growing the business significantly. Jeff's love of music started at a very early age. It lead to learning numerous instruments and, by his teen years, frequent gigs and performances. After success in the business world, Jeff invested in a recording studio in New York City and earned a master's degree in music production from the Conservatory of Recording Arts and Sciences. Today, Jeff is a collector of vintage guitars and remains active in business and music.



Theresa Seifert graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Elementary Education with a certification in Special Education from Minnesota State University - Moorhead and Master's Degree in Educational Leadership from Northern Arizona University. After a decade of public school teaching, Theresa earned her law degree from the University of Arizona College of Law in 2005. In the past, she has represented Child Protective Services and clerked for the Arizona Court of Appeals. Currently, she is the managing partner at the Law Offices of Vescio & Seifert, P.C. which focuses on all aspects of family law including divorce, custody, third party rights, and appeals.



Jonathan Thomas is a lifelong multi-instrumentalist musician and served as Managing Director and President of Cordoba Music Group from 2005-2024. In that time the company earned multiple awards and provided industry leading instruments to players of all levels in over 50 countries. Jonathan started as a musician, songwriter, and teacher after attending USC's Thornton School of Music and earning his BS in Business from Pepperdine University. He was a member of the National Association of Music Merchants (NAMM) and currently serves as Managing Partner of Spitzer-Thomas Aviation based in Los Angeles. He credits playing music with many joys, life skills, and experiences that have enriched his life and is passionate about sharing the benefits of music education.



Kimeia Vu has 20 years' experience as an HR leader, currently holding the position of Chief People Officer at Octaura LLC, a fintech startup in New York City. In her role, Kimeia is the driving force behind the firm's people strategy and its alignment to key business objectives. In addition to overall workforce planning, leadership development and talent management strategies, she brings particular focus to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) and provides executive oversight and support to drive the firm's DEI strategy and action plan. Kimeia sits on Lead Guitar's board of directors and provides human capital best practices and partners with board members to execute on Lead Guitar's growth strategy.



Monika M. Wiley, Ed.D. is currently the Assistant Superintendent of Strategic Improvement for Clayton County Public Schools in Georgia. Previously she served as the Director of Fine Arts for the school system. Dr. Wiley is committed to reforming public education and has a particular interest in improving schools through research-based school improvement processes. Continuous improvement of public schools is essential to providing increased student performance and quality results. Dr. Wiley earned her bachelors from Florida A&M University, Master's from Nova Southeastern University, and she earned her Educational Specialist and Doctorate from the University of West Georgia.

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