



Empower a child through music
visit LEADGUITAR.ORG



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2025 ANNUAL REPORT

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
2025

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.



Dear Friends,

The story of Lead Guitar’s 2024-25 school year was one of bold ideas, promising collaborations, and student transformations and triumphs. In terms of our curriculum, we reconceived our Adaptive Guitar method for students with learning differences or motor-neuron barriers to reflect lessons learned through five years of co-teaching with Exceptional Education specialists, and expanded Lead Guitar Method Book II to better represent the cultural heritage of our students. Intent on system change, we collaborated with our nationwide network of university partners to improve the way music educators are trained to teach guitar classes. And, in service to our core mission, we empowered thousands of students to rewrite their personal narrative and see themselves as capable, resilient and worthy - students like Alan Gasperin, who began playing guitar in his school’s Lead Guitar program freshman year and, in May, won a full-ride scholarship to study guitar at Arizona State University. Alan intends to be the first in his family to earn a college degree. While Lead Guitar’s primary goal is to improve academic outcomes and life skills through music, it’s always a joy to see a student develop into a virtuoso.



Check out Alan Gasperin playing ‘Capricho Arabe’

Having driven 125% growth over the previous four school years in terms of students served annually, Lead Guitar planned FY25 as a year to consolidate behind our current size, and ensure we were positioned to sustain this level of service through potential economic uncertainties. One of those potential uncertainties came to fruition on May 6th when the National Endowment for the Arts grant that Lead Guitar had received for 12 consecutive years was terminated. That stumbling block was no match for the generosity of our Board of Directors and YOU, our Donors, who stepped up to help us end our budget year with a modest operating surplus. We also did, in fact, set new records by a small margin in all of our service categories, teaching 7,590 students at 106 schools and reaching 51,181 students and community members through events. The details of those outcomes are on the next page.

Lead Guitar has relatively little exposure, especially now, to volatile public funds. We move forward with confidence knowing that we have not just survived, but thrived through the Great Recession, the COVID-19 pandemic, and dozens of less substantial bumps in the road. Together with YOU, our stakeholders, we have molded an efficient and sustainable organization that consistently rises to meet the ever-increasing demand for our services in underserved schools nationwide.

On the following pages, you will see the life-changing impacts that your effort and generosity have produced. You inspired over 7,500 students this year to improve their grades, graduation rates, resilience, and life skills, creating a ripple effect that continues to spread the transformative power of making music through their communities.

Brad Richter & Marc Sandroff
Executive Director / Board President and Co-Founders

Outcomes

In 2024-25, Lead Guitar...

Taught **7,590** students year-round through **257** daily to twice-weekly classes at **106** schools in Atlanta, Chicago, Denver, Detroit, Los Angeles, Phoenix and Tucson;

Trained **130** School Teachers; and

Reached **51,181** additional students and community members through events.



Breaking down events:

23,336* attended in-school student performances, Guest Artist Assemblies, or Student Showcase Concerts on the campuses of our local university partners

27,845 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

88% of Lead Guitar participants qualified for free or reduced-price lunch and/or were designated as “low-income” by their school

The Legacy of Lead Guitar

An additional **2,432** 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.

Impacts

What Changed for the Students Who Participated?

In addition to sharing the joy of music-making with thousands of students each year, Lead Guitar programs have been shown to provide life changing whole-child benefits to participants. We measure those impacts by hiring outside experts to conduct research and analyze student data, and through observational assessments completed by participating school teachers.

The Report on Whole-Child Benefits of Lead Guitar by 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) concluded:

“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.”

Here are two specific findings from Dr. Betts’ report:

80% of high school students participating for 2+ years improved their cumulative GPA
52% decline in absences among students considered to be “at risk for dropping out”

Through observational assessments created as part of the ASU Lodestar Social Impact Measurement certificate course, participating school teachers reported that their partnership with Lead Guitar contributed to the growth of their students in several key areas including:

98% of participating school teachers saw improved student focus and engagement
91.5% reported growth in student resilience in overcoming obstacles or challenges
98% witnessed growth in student ability to collaborate and work as a team
84% saw a reduction in incidents of adverse behavior among students

And at a time when teacher retention is an issue of nationwide concern, this data point is particularly noteworthy:

91% of participating school teachers reported that their Lead Guitar partnership positively affects their potential longevity as an educator

Lead Guitar Four Pillars of Service

Lead Guitar engages students, teachers and families through Four Pillars of Service:

Pillar 1 | Classroom Instruction and Curriculum delivered by an international team of Teaching Artists using Lead Guitar’s proprietary method, endorsed by the University of Southern California, the University of Georgia, Arizona State University, and the Aspen Music Festival.

Pillar 2 | Accredited Professional Development builds sustainability over years by training school teachers employed at our partner schools as guitar players and pedagogues.

Pillar 3 | In-School Assemblies and our interactive *We Are Guitar* broadcasts connect global touring artists with students in some of the nation’s toughest school environments.

Pillar 4 | Student Performances invite participants to local college campuses to perform for friends and family and share a meal in an atmosphere that empowers students who may be the first in their family to attend university.



“[Lead Guitar] has been a fantastic program for my cross-categorical classroom. It’s beneficial in all aspects of their learning, development, and well-being.”

– Elementary School Teacher, Tucson

Pillar 1: Classroom Instruction and Curriculum

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, but it’s more than that. 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.

Teaching Artists have at least a master’s degree in Guitar and several years of relevant teaching experience when we hire them. They are touring artists, professors and Fulbright scholars who have shown alignment with our mission and empathy for our students through their lived experience. Once hired, Teaching Artists go through 18 months of on-the-job training that includes trauma-informed and social-emotional learning best practices.



Detroit Regional Director Onur Alakavuklar teaching at Pulaski K-8.

“Our Teaching Artist’s collaborative approach and strong rapport as a co-teacher creates a positive, motivating environment where every student feels valued and empowered to do their best.”

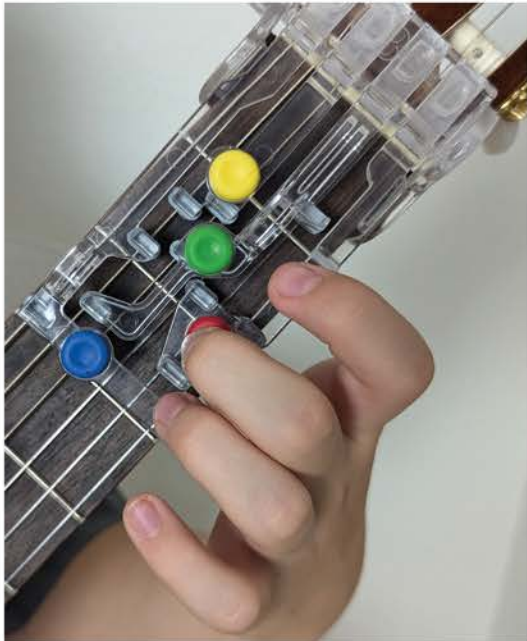
– High School Teacher, Chicago

Guitar in the Exceptional Education Classroom

At the start of the 2024-25 school year, Lead Guitar launched a refreshed edition of our Adaptive Curriculum, designed to bring the joy and benefits of music-making to students with exceptional needs.

Originally introduced in 2018, the curriculum was reconceived based on lessons learned from six years of collaborating with Exceptional Education specialists. It uses an assistive device, which attaches to the neck of the guitar and allows students to play full chords by pressing one of four color-coded buttons. With this simple tool and a corresponding color-coded notation system, students with learning differences or motor-neuron challenges can meaningfully participate in guitar classes and performances.

The new edition is fully aligned with our core curriculum, allowing teachers to differentiate instruction within a single class. Students using the Adaptive Curriculum learn the same songs, in the same sequence, as their peers by strumming chords while others play melodies, creating a unified, inclusive musical experience. This approach supports the reality that many teachers are navigating a wide range of student needs in one classroom. The Adaptive Curriculum is also used in self-contained exceptional education settings, and, whether in self-contained or inclusion classrooms, it serves students who would otherwise not have access to music classes.



The "Chord Buddy" assistive device



Teaching Artist Kacey Ellis works with a Foster Park student.

Peek inside an Adaptive classroom at Foster Park K-8 in Chicago led by CPS teacher Lauren Griffin



Pillar 2: Accredited Professional Development

In addition to co-teaching with our content experts, planning sessions, and private lessons, our Teachers' Workshops offer K-12 teachers formal Professional Development towards promotion and recertification as they master the Lead Guitar curriculum and improve their own playing. This work is the key to making our programs sustainable.



Freddy Vazquez leads a Mid-Year Teachers' Workshop in Tucson.

"I wouldn't have known where to start without your program."

– Middle School Teacher, Phoenix



Pillar 3: In-School Assemblies

Lead Guitar's in-school assemblies and *We Are Guitar* broadcasts are well established experiential learning opportunities for our students and effective lenses through which to expose tens of thousands of additional students and community members to music-making of the highest caliber each year. Here are some of the artists who connected with Lead Guitar students in the 2024-25 school year.



Check out
Douglas Lora in
We Are Guitar
Ep. 12

Douglas Lora

Three-time Grammy nominee and the newest member of the Grammy-winning Los Angeles Guitar Quartet, Douglas Lora performed for students at El Sereno Middle School and Belmont High School in Los Angeles last Fall. His performances and Q&A sessions with students were also the centerpiece of *We Are Guitar* Ep. 12.

Douglas is a long-time friend of Lead Guitar, having done outreach work for us as part of the Brasil Guitar Duo beginning in 2017. Equally at home with Classical, Jazz, World, and Popular music, he has collaborated with YoYo Ma, Paquito d'Rivera, the Assad Brothers, Anat Cohen, and legendary Brazilian Heavy Metal band Sepultura among many others. Douglas' touring schedule has taken him to the most important theaters and concert halls in the United States, Europe, Asia, and Latin America. When he's not traveling, you can find him teaching at Cal State University, Fullerton.



Marko Topchii

In the Spring, Marko Topchii performed for students at Cesar Chavez High School and Maryvale High School in Phoenix, and Pueblo Gardens K-8 in Tucson. Born to a musical family in Ukraine, his prodigious achievements are best exemplified by his numerous competition victories: more than 100 awards worldwide in international classical guitar competitions – 55 of them being First Prizes, including the 54th International Guitar Competition Francisco Tarrega, the 35th International Guitar Competition Andres Segovia in Spain, the 50th International Guitar Competition Michele Pittaluga in Italy, the 6th JoAnn Falletta International Guitar Concerto Competition in New York, the 56th Tokyo International Guitar Competition, and, most recently, the 2023 Guitar Foundation of America International Concert Artist Competition in New York.

Curt Chambers, Lead Guitar Artist Ambassador

A Lead Guitar Artist Ambassador is a Guest Artist who shows extraordinary dedication to our mission over years, and works with our students and staff on a range of high impact projects. We first introduced Curt, who is the Grammy-winning guitarist and back-up singer for Alicia Keys, Rihanna and Eminem, as the Guest Artist for *We Are Guitar* Episode 6. Since then, he has played assembly concerts for Lead Guitar schools in Tucson and Phoenix, recorded a video tutorial series focused on teaching essential Rock riffs for our online learning platform, and returned as a *We Are Guitar* Guest Artist for Episode 10.

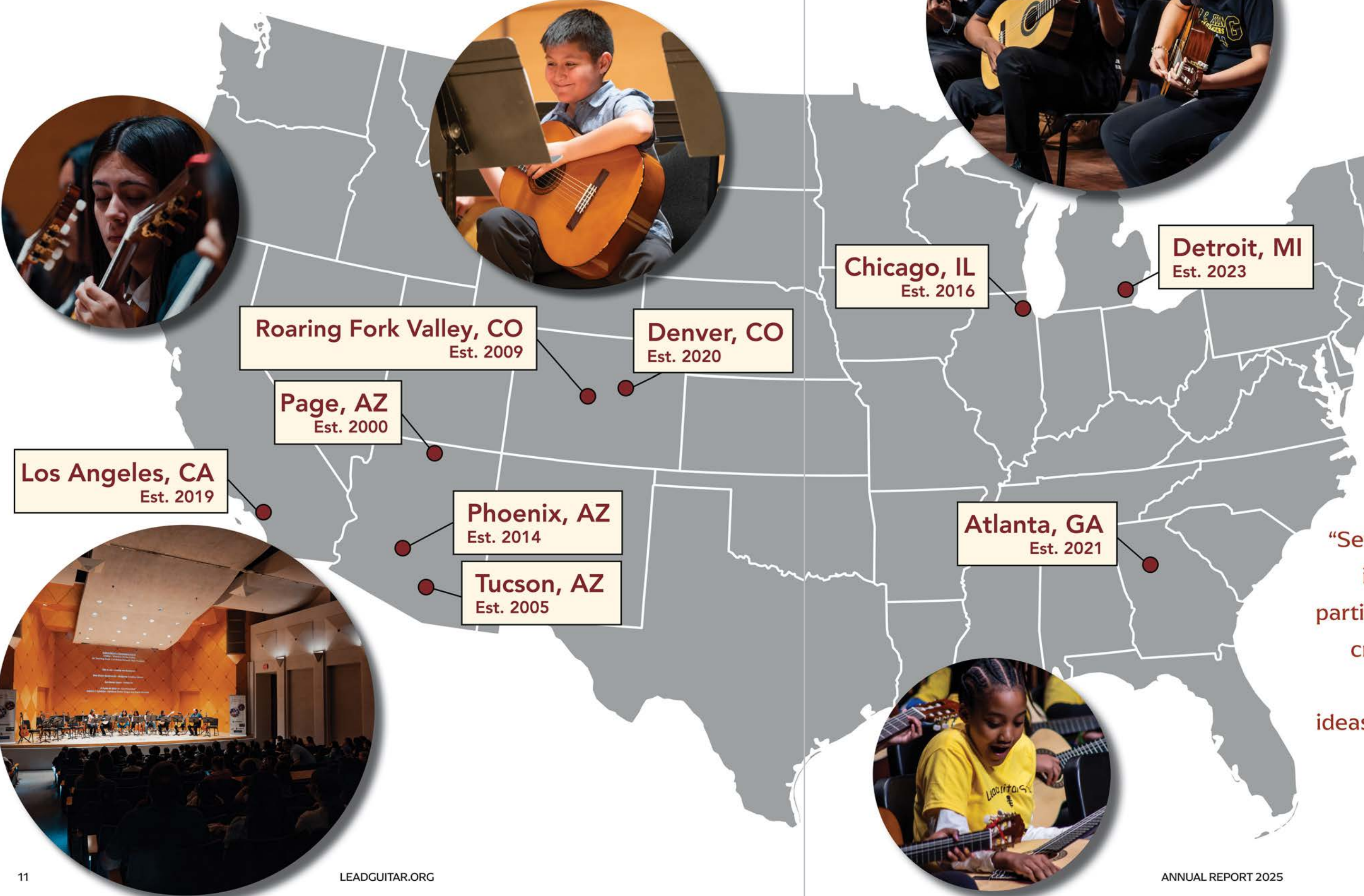
In December, Curt took a break from touring with Jelly Roll to play assembly concerts at four Lead Guitar schools in Atlanta and Athens, Georgia. His ability to connect with our students was on full display and his versatility and willingness to meet kids where they are made for some of the most engaging school concerts we have ever hosted. Curt regularly takes requests from students and invites them to join him on stage. In Atlanta, one brave young woman sang an impromptu version of Radiohead's "Creep" with Curt, and in Athens he serenaded a student with a Rock/Blues rendition of "Happy Birthday."

We have more curriculum-related projects planned with Curt Chambers, and he will be visiting another one of our cities for school concerts this year, and every year for the foreseeable future. The Lead Guitar team is grateful beyond words to have Artists of Curt's stature contributing to the cause in so many meaningful ways.



Pillar 4: Student Performances

In the 2024-25 school year, Lead Guitar hosted eight Showcase Concerts at awe-inspiring venues around the U.S., including: The Aspen Music Festival and School’s Harris Hall, Arizona State University, The University of Georgia, and, our newest partner, Wayne State University in Detroit.



“Several students who were initially shy or hesitant to participate have begun taking creative risks – trying new songs, sharing their own ideas, and even performing in front of their peers.”

– Elementary School Teacher, Los Angeles

Finances

ASSETS	
Total Bank Accounts	\$ 477,646.35
Accounts Receivable	\$ 59,897.00
Other Current Assets	\$ 181.30
Fixed Assets	\$ 385,001.36
TOTAL	\$ 922,726.01

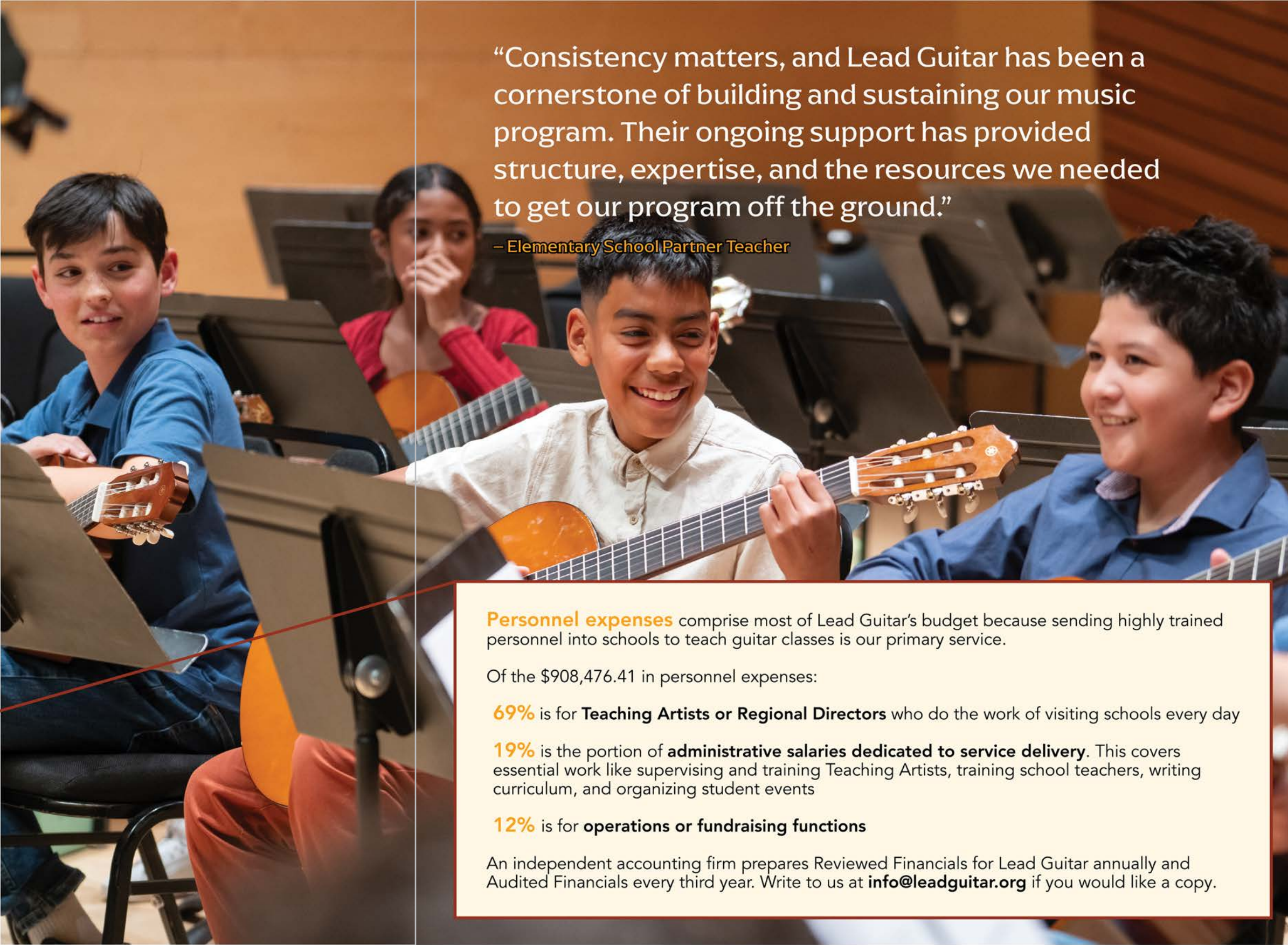
LIABILITIES	
Accounts Payable	\$ 162.50
Payroll Liabilities	\$ 0.00
TOTAL	\$ 162.50

EQUITY	
Restricted Net Assets	\$ 200,000.00
Unrestricted Net Assets	\$ 262,146.11
Board Designated Assets	\$ 259,937.92
Net Revenue	\$ 200,479.48
TOTAL	\$ 922,563.51

INCOME	
Foundation	\$ 462,500.00
Board	\$ 109,772.70
Corporate	\$ 16,237.00
Individual and Business	\$ 146,385.17
Fundraising Events	\$ 235,716.68
City/County/State Government	\$ 53,397.00
Federal Government	\$ 35,000.00
Collaborative School-Based Grants	\$ 23,068.00
In-Kind	\$ 4,206.00
Program Service Fees	\$ 3,000.00
Curriculum Sales	\$ 20,179.43.00
Interest Income	\$ 7,337.35
TOTAL	\$ 1,116,799.33

EXPENSES	
Personnel	\$ 908,476.41
Fundraising/Development	\$ 84,000.09
Facilities and Equipment	\$ 9,661.42
Operations	\$ 44,610.92
Production and Events	\$ 37,009.07
Travel and Meetings	\$ 5,346.16
Curriculum Sales	\$ 18,070.69
Other	\$ 9,145.09
TOTAL	\$ 1,116,319.85

NET OPERATING REVENUE	\$ 479.48
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“Consistency matters, and Lead Guitar has been a cornerstone of building and sustaining our music program. Their ongoing support has provided structure, expertise, and the resources we needed to get our program off the ground.”

– Elementary School Partner Teacher

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 \$908,476.41 in personnel expenses:

69% is for **Teaching Artists or Regional Directors** who do the work of visiting schools every day

19% 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

12% 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, 2024-June 30, 2025. We strive to acknowledge donors accurately. Should you like to update your recognition preference, please contact marina@leadguitar.org.

- \$50,000 +**

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 - The Molly Blank Fund of The Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation
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 - John and Ginger Woehrman
 - Palmer Wright
 - Darren Yager
 - Mike Youngman
 - Timm Zahn

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**
Program & Events Manager
- **Jennifer Roberts**
Director of Operations
- **Nick Lenio**
Director of Instruction

Regional Directors

- **Christian Cruz**
Los Angeles
- **Denis Azabagic**
Chicago
- **Dr. Daniel Bolshoy**
Atlanta/Athens
- **Andrew Smith**
Phoenix
- **Dr. Onur Alakavuklar**
Detroit

Teaching Artists

- **Alejandro Acosta**
Los Angeles
- **Ryan Roubison**
Phoenix
- **Juan Rivera**
Chicago
- **Doris Cosic**
Los Angeles
- **Derick Sears**
Phoenix
- **Kacey Ellis**
Chicago
- **Adrian Martinez**
Los Angeles
- **Dr. David Sewell**
Phoenix
- **Scott Walter**
Detroit
- **Erin Young**
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- **Freddy Vazquez**
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- **James Terrell**
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- **Juri Yun**
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- **Zhivko Nikolov**
Chicago
- **Hoberdan Peno**
Atlanta/Athens
- **Nick Epple**
Tucson
- **Fabricio Lock Sotomayor**
Chicago
- **Juan Felipe Avila**
Atlanta/Athens
- **Dr. Pablo Gonzalez**
Tucson
- **Ivan Resendiz**
Chicago
- **Ryan Moore**
Atlanta/Athens

Lead Guitar Teaching Artists on the World Stage

We see guitar celebrities inspiring students at live and digital Lead Guitar events every year, but did you know that many Lead Guitar Teaching Artists, past and present, are guitar celebrities in their own right? We're proud to offer these accomplished musicians stable work while they continue to pursue their performance and university teaching ambitions. Here are just a few examples of the distinguished careers of Lead Guitar Teaching Artists:



Bokyung Byun – with a reputation as one of the most sought-after guitarists of her generation, Bo holds the distinction of being the first female winner of the prestigious JoAnn Falletta International Guitar Concerto Competition, where Falletta herself described Bokyung's performance as "stunning, showcasing her gorgeous tone, immaculate technique, and sophisticated musicianship." During her tenure as a Lead Guitar Teaching Artist in Los Angeles, Bo won the grand prize at the 2021 Guitar Foundation of America International Concert Artist Competition. She is currently the guitar professor at the University of North Texas and is working to bring Lead Guitar programs to her new home state.



Denis Azabagic – is Lead Guitar's Regional Director for Chicago and considered among the most accomplished classical guitarists on the planet. Renowned for his elegant musical approach and unique ability to connect with audiences on a profound level, Azabagic (Bosnia and Herzegovina) has received praise from critics around the globe. Azabagic's exceptional talent has earned him twenty-four prizes in international competitions, a prestigious international touring career, and a discography comprising over 15 CDs, including an upcoming collaborative album between his Cavatina Duo and the Grammy-winning Pacifica Quartet. He is currently serving on the faculty of the University of Illinois at Chicago.



Daniel Vildósola – a Mexican-American musician, composer, and producer based in London, Daniel has established himself as a key figure in both the alternative roots music and electronic music scenes. He left Lead Guitar in 2014 to be the on-stage guitarist for the Broadway musical *American Idiot*. He is a core member of the band HÆLOS and he has collaborated with various artists, including Passenger, Will Young, Willow Kayne, CMAT, Bea Elmy Martin, and John Waugh.

You can see Daniel performing "Let Her Go" with Ed Sheeran and Passenger by scanning the QR code!



Our Team: Board Members



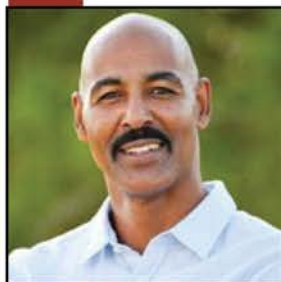
Dan Bueschel is currently CEO of Pueblo Mechanical, a mechanical contracting and services firm. Previous to his role at Pueblo Mechanical, Dan held the position of CEO North American Healthcare at Sodexo, a leading global healthcare services provider, and VPGM West at Johnson Controls. Dan credits music 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 is the owner of Howell Athletics where he uses his 28 years of experience to train athletes of all ages, 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 BA. He currently co-hosts the UA Football pre- and post-game radio broadcasts on Wildcats Radio 1290am, and also served as the Strength and Conditioning Coach for the Tucson Sugar Skulls of the Indoor Football League (2019-2022). Active in service and philanthropy, Glenn supports youth access to arts and athletics in Southern AZ.



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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Design:
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2025 ANNUAL REPORT