

**FURRY FRIEND:** Find a new pet in the classified ads. **5C**

**ACT OF KINDNESS:** Stranger finds couple's lost dog. **3C**

**BURSITIS:** Pain in the thigh could be a symptom. **3C**



# Rock stars



From left, Jacob Plitman, Jay Buchanan, instructor Mike Caruso, Mason Casey and Jessica Lance jam to the tune "Phoenix," written by Caruso.

PAUL MARTIN | HPE

## Music store gives students a chance to jam on their own

BY ERICA KINNAIRD  
ENTERPRISE STAFF WRITER

**J**ust like the movie, High Point now has its very own "School of Rock" – sort of.

No, Jack Black hasn't taken over your child's school, but music teacher Mike Caruso has taken over a studio at Yesterday's Music, 106 Westover Drive.

It's a place where jam sessions happen.

Owners Paul and Cathy Szydlak expanded their music store to incorporate unique music lessons.

They have held music lessons there before – guitar, bass and drums – but once they completed renovating a salon into a music studio, which was initially intended to allow local music groups to rehearse and record, Caruso had another idea for the space.

He wanted to use it for the kids.

So this past August, Caruso held his first "jam session" – a place

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**Mike Caruso**  
Music Instructor

where kids taking music lessons could put their skills together and form a band.

"It blew them away," Caruso says. "Parents love it. They thought it was awesome."

Not just anyone can participate in these jam sessions, though, Caruso explains.

The music students have to be ready to work in a group. That means practicing and learning their instruments.

"We try to get them as soon as we feel they are ready," Caruso says. "If they're willing to work at it, it's fun."



Students in the jam session enjoy hearing how instruments blend together.

Plus, he says the jam sessions help the kids learn how to work together. "We show them how to feel the music," Paul Szydlak says. "It's kind of like rock and roll school."

And it's evident that the students – and parents – are feeling the music already.

Terri Newton's son, Justin Bost, plays drums and has taken lessons from Szydlak.

"(Paul) told him he wouldn't be great until he learned to play with other people," Newton says. "It has helped him – and he is excited."

Justin agrees with his mom. "I was kind of nervous and excited. ... It's fun," he says. "(Playing the drums) is a lot cooler with the guitar."

Now, he practices more.

The same goes for Lee Parker's grandson, Dereje Parker, who plays bass.

"My grandson was excited," Parker says. "(The jam session) makes them (the musicians) feel like they're a part of something. It makes what they do on their own more important."

Dereje says what he learns during the jam session will help him at church, too, where he hopes to be in the church band.

Like Dereje and Justin, the kids involved in the jam sessions all have similar feelings about the new experience.

"When you play alone, it's very different," says Jacob Plitman, drummer. "When you're in the band, it's cool."

Daniel Burton, who has played guitar for a couple years, loves the jam session.

"It's just kind of cool to hear," Daniel says. "I want to be in a rock band."

While the jam sessions are fun for the kids, Szydlak says the group allows them to learn teamwork – and that message has started to spread in the few months the sessions have existed.

In fact, "A father was in here earlier this week wanting to get a guitar for his son to take lessons," Szydlak says, adding that a friend had told his son about the jam sessions.

The group sessions also give students the "Aha!" factor – "They say, 'Oh, that's why he showed me that,'" Szydlak says.

The jam sessions are still in their infancy, Szydlak adds.

"We're still trying stuff out," he explains.

In the spring, he hopes to hold a recital for the students to show what they have learned as a group.

Regardless of the outcome – rock stars or just really good players – Caruso hopes they continue having fun with the instruments.

"I hope they play all their lives, whether it's in clubs or in a garage," Caruso says.



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The music store currently has four different jam sessions, serving 13 students.

ekinnaid@hpe.com | 888-3578