

Teacher's pop-up concert stirs excitement for school

When Ryker Pray, 6, of Brockport heard who was performing at the Monika Andrews Children's Park in Brockport recently, he was raring to go.

"As soon as I told him 'Your music teacher is going to be there doing a concert' he was out the door," said Megan Pray of Brockport, Ryker's aunt. "He was so excited to see Mrs. Kuhn!"

Ryker and about 50 other youngsters attended the pop-up concert at the park on Aug. 9. The rock star was Sara Kuhn, the music teacher at the Ginther Elementary School in Brockport.

By now, most people are aware of the pop-up trend; eateries, artists and retailers temporarily and unexpectedly setting up shop in a unique location. But, Kuhn surprised the community by offering a pop-up teacher experience to help get kids ready and excited for back to school.

"This idea has always been in the back of my head as a way to help with the transition for the new kindergartners," said Kuhn, who received an enthusiastic green-light for the concert by her building principal Debra Wayne. "Because of the unique way Brockport schools are set up, I teach every kindergartner. I'm a face they all know or will know and I wanted them to have a positive experience with me before school even started."

Kuhn put a few posts on her teacher Twitter page and some Brockport parenting Facebook pages to advertise the concert, but said she never expected such a huge turnout. Every parking place was full and wagons and bikes lined the sidewalk.

Tommy Brice, of Brockport, brought his first-grader and 3-year-old twins to the concert after his wife saw a post on Facebook. They danced and sang along with Kuhn as she played various instruments and introduced the group to items they'll see in her classroom, like an owl puppet and cleanup basket.

"Our oldest already had Mrs. Kuhn as a kindergartner, but it was nice for her to interact with her again before school starts," Brice said. "It was nice for the kids to get out and enjoy the good weather, the music and other kids."

to first grade.

"A lot of people didn't understand why I wanted to move to the younger grades," said Kuhn, lives in the district with her husband Daniel and their three children, ages 14, 10 and 6. "I believe it's really important to be where children start; to give them a foundation and help start their love for music now."

Kuhn draws inspiration from the teaching method of Zoltán Kodály, the late Hungarian composer and educationalist who extolled teaching music to children early and the importance of elementary music teachers in the community.

Among her favorite Kodály quotes: "It is far more important who the elementary music teacher is in a small town than who the director of an opera house is because if the opera house director is not good, he will be dismissed in a year, but a poor music teacher in a small town can kill off the love of music for 30 years from 30 classes of children. This is an enormous responsibility."

A responsibility Kuhn clearly takes to heart.

Contact Caurie at caurie@urgrad.rochester.edu with news from west-side towns. She's on Facebook at [facebook.com/BrockportBlog](https://www.facebook.com/BrockportBlog).



Sara Kuhn, music teacher at the Ginther Elementary School in Brockport, leads a recent pop-up concert at the Monika Andrews Children's Park in Brockport. COURTESY OF CAURIE PUTNAM



West Extra

Kuhn, who grew up in Massena in St. Lawrence County and graduated from Nazareth College with her bachelor's and master's degrees, is celebrating her 20th year as a music teacher.

Caurie Putnam

Guest columnist

She began her career in the Rochester City School District and has taught at Brockport since 2006. Most of her career was with middle school students, but three years ago she moved to the Ginther School, which is for kids from universal pre-kindergarten