

?Creative 'Lyrics Alive' program receives grant from ASCAP John Mellencamp Fund

Written by Administrator

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?Lyrics Alive, a creative writing and music program for elementary school children conducted by Scott County musicians Bob and Mary Bomar Ritter, has received a special grant from The ASCAP Foundation John Mellencamp Fund in 2008.

The ASCAP Foundation, the charitable arm of the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP), supports music education and talent development programs all across the country. ASCAP is the New York City-based international licensing agency that collects and pays royalties to songwriters for radio, TV, movie and live performances of their songs,

"The ASCAP Foundation is so pleased to provide funding for the Lyrics Alive songwriting program through a special grant from The ASCAP Foundation John Mellencamp Fund. This fund was created in honor of Indiana musical great John Mellencamp after he received The ASCAP Foundation Champion Award this past December for his outstanding use of music in the service of humanity. Through this grant, 13 schools will receive support for a four-day songwriting residency, including Seymour's Emerson Elementary, the school John attended. Lyrics Alive does vital work by introducing the idea of songwriting to rural school children in Indiana. Perhaps the next Mellencamp will be inspired to begin writing songs," said ASCAP Foundation Director Colleen McDonough.

After years of volunteering in the Country Music Foundation's Words and Music Program in Nashville, Tn., Bob and Mary Ritter developed Lyrics Alive in 1997 to teach children the challenging yet fun art of lyric and song writing.

They spend three days with students writing, editing, composing and rehearsing original songs. On the last day the students perform the songs with Bob and Mary in one or two school concerts. Concerts are recorded and CDs are made available to students.

Some schools are using Lyrics Alive as a way to improve writing scores and to help meet state and federal standards in writing, music and oral presentation. "Along the way, students learn the importance of teamwork, cooperation, compromise and goal setting. Students who struggle with academic or personal issues have thrived in their Lyrics Alive experience", stated Mary Bomar Ritter, President of Lyrics Alive Inc. "Many of our 'alumni' tell us how much they enjoyed and were inspired by Lyrics Alive. Some are continuing with their writing and even pursuing their own music careers."

Through the years, the four-day residency has been conducted 84 times, producing over 700 songs and 65 "live" concert recordings with thousands of children.

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Lyrics Alive is a small, non-profit organization and is eligible to receive grants and contributions from various sources to help underwrite program costs. "We are incredibly honored by this grant. John is one of our home state's musical legends, and to receive this fund in his name is something we could never have imagined," said Bob Ritter, CEO of Lyrics Alive Inc. "Most of our programs are in schools in small, rural towns, the kind of places that were the backdrop for so many of John Mellencamp's songs. It really is a good match, and we're eternally grateful to The ASCAP Foundation for their continued support."

The Ritters have lived in Scott County nearly six years. Bob has deep family roots here since his parents grew up in Scottsburg, as did his aunt, uncles and numerous cousins.

This year, Lyrics Alive visited Scottsburg and Vienna-Finley Elementary schools, as well as several other schools in Southern Indiana, Kentucky, Tennessee and Virginia. For more information, go to www.LyricsAlive.org and www.ascapfoundation.org