

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Tuesday, June 9, 2009

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New Vision opens doors for young musicians

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Tonya Dorsey and New Vision drew a standing-room-only crowd to St. Therese of the Child Jesus Church in Mount Airy for two reasons last Friday evening. First, many from around the city wanted to support the New Vision Foundation's scholarship fund for African-American students to study music. Second, they came to hear the vibrant voices of the New Vision choir as well as the younger voices, including the recipient of the nonprofit group's inaugural 2008 scholarship award.

One of the highlights of the program was the naming of the 10 scholarship finalists and the awarding of four music scholarships. The four recipients were 12-year-old Alexis Daughtery to study cello, 11-year-old Devynn Gray to study viola, 13-year-old Angelique Tucker to study violin, and 14-year-old Alexander Tutt to study trumpet. Finalists Deborah Bullock, Ashli Crandall, Alexis Franks, Talaya Martin-Smith, Ashli Stephens, and Adam White also were recognized with certificates.

"This is what we do at St. Therese because we believe in the importance of opening the gates," said the Rev. Stephen

D. Thorne, pastor of St. Therese, who drew thunderous applause in the evening's welcome after the opening prayer. "You are always welcome in this house. One of things about our Lord is that we learn that we come together with music. It is one force that brings people together."

For the group's pianist and director Tonya M. Taylor-Dorsey, this was a celebratory weekend. Seeing the freewill offering envelopes flowing midway through Friday evening's concert was helping a dream birthed in 2007 come true. After months of bureaucratic red tape and filling out paperwork, she had just received the New Vision Foundation's official 501(c)3 nonprofit tax exemption certificate.

"This is a blessing," said Taylor-Dorsey. "We haven't been together that long but I feel that we are already accomplishing so much. I believe that children need to be exposed to the arts. They need to be trained to listen to all types of music. This is more important as schools are cutting music programs."

Scholarship committee chairperson Cheryl Pitts explained the selection process for the scholarships. The first recipient of the Tonya Dorsey and New Vision Scholarship was 10-year-old Danielle Clark, who studied at

Settlement Music School this past academic year. Clark was among those who performed Friday evening.

Also on stage, the members of New Vision who attend various Philadelphia churches. They represented Immaculate Conception Catholic Church, St. Nicholas Tolentine, St. Charles Borromeo Catholic Church, Our Lady of Hope Catholic Church, St. Therese Catholic Church, Tenth Memorial Baptist Church, St. Matthews Baptist Church, St. Martin De Porres Catholic Church and Enon Tabernacle Baptist Church. All vocalists volunteer their time to the foundation.

"This year we had an application process," said Taylor-Dorsey, before giving out the scholarship awards and certificates. She noted that each finalist was chosen from a pool after being interviewed and participating in an audition. She then invited Clark, last year's recipient, to show off her new piano skills. The now 11-year-old budding musician and singer was warmly received by the Northwest Philadelphia audience.

The children who sang with the choir also garnered appreciation from the crowd during the segment where they gave their names and their career aspirations.