

# Service clubs instrumental in equipping school musicians

CARADOC PUBLIC SCHOOL: Generous Mt. Brydges Lions and Lioness clubs pay so Grade 6, 7 and 8 pupils can play

By DEBORA VAN BRENK, THE LONDON FREE PRESS

Last Updated: November 15, 2011 8:26pm



**VIDEO:** The Mount Brydges Lions and Lioness clubs donated nearly \$9000 in musical instruments to grateful students at Caradoc Elementary School.

MT. BRYDGES - Sean Barnett has discovered something unexpected about himself in the past two months: he was born to play music.

His great-grandfather played trombone; so did his grandfather.

Now Sean, in Grade 7, does, too. "I've been wanting to play it for a long time . . . It's a really big deal to me."

For him, and for the other Grades 6, 7 and 8 pupils at Caradoc public school, the unattainable has become reality - music instruments they all can use.

What would ordinarily have taken the school a decade of fund-raising and penny-pinching, the local Lions and Lioness service clubs have made happen in one fell swoop.

"This is something we could never do. Thank goodness for service clubs," principal Ron Van Belois said Tuesday.

The instrumental program began only four years earlier, with so little gear that up to four pupils shared the same instrument. The only money for new instruments would have to come out of a budget that also included photocopying, paper and pens, gym supplies and other essentials.

At that pace, this year's crop of kindergarteners would have reached high school before there were enough instruments for all.

Then magic happened.

"One day (Lions Club president) Ron Madill walks in and says, 'we have a plan. We do a lot for the area and we'd like to buy you some musical instruments,'" Van Belois said.

By August, with the clubs' donations, a truckload of 20 shiny, new instruments bought from Music Aid in London - flutes, tubas, trumpets, clarinet, French horns, saxophones, trombones and baritones - was unloaded at the school's back door.

There were also music stands aplenty and a donated drum kit.

Music teacher Julie Malcolm said she almost cried when she learned of the clubs' plans.

"This is an unheard-of donation from a community group. I consider myself and my students very lucky."

Tuesday, the school said thanks with a concert for their benefactors. First, the Victors' March and then a medley featuring, We Will Rock You.

"Looking over the crowd today I think we will have some musicians down through the years coming out of this group," Madill told them.

He said it's also a great way for kids to showcase talents beyond sports or traditional academic subjects.

"It'll open many doors down through their life if they follow it up," Madill said.

He said the Lions were inspired by a similar club's donation to Mosa school near Glencoe, and that this donation might inspire other service clubs around the region to help grow children's love of music.

Malcolm said many kids, with only two months of playing experience, have now unwrapped a gift they never knew they had.

"I truly feel that some of the students have found their niche through musical instruments and that is wonderful to see."