



Elizabeth Public Schools Press Release

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TGF to Enhance Music Programs of Four More EPS Schools

Elizabeth, N.J. October 26, 2015- Renowned guitarist Damon Marks (Alicia Keys, Jermaine Paul, Bret Michaels) and his non-profit Traveling Guitar Foundation along with sponsors Schecter Guitars, Mogami Cable, Guitar Center, EMG Pickups and Blackstar Amplification to donate (20) electric guitars and bass guitars, Blackstar ID: Core 10 amplifiers, instrument cables and various percussion to schools in Elizabeth, NJ

The Traveling Guitar Foundation (TGF) will be returning to Elizabeth, New Jersey, the hometown of guitarist and founder Damon Marks, for the third consecutive year to inspire students through music education and make generous donations of brand new Schecter guitars, Blackstar amplifiers, percussion instruments provided by Guitar Center, Vic Firth and Conn-Selmer and Mogami instrument cables to four music programs at Elizabeth Public Schools.

The special events, including a special performance workshop and the donation of musical supplies, will take place at Benjamin Franklin School No. 13 (248 Ripley Place) on October 30, Nicholas Murray Butler School No. 23 (501 Union Avenue) on November 13, Charles J. Hudson School No. 25 (525 First Avenue) on December 4, and Juan Pablo Duarte – Jose Julian Marti School No. 28 (25 First Street) on December 11.

Renowned guitarist/songwriter Damon Marks, founder of TGF will present the guitars and equipment and perform to School No. 13, School No. 23, School No. 25, and School No. 28. Marks developed his passion for music while attending the Elizabeth Public Schools.

“It is always wonderful when I have the opportunity to return home and give the gift of music and music education back to my community,” said Marks. “The kids are always super excited during the live performances we do during each school visit, which includes participation by their own peers, and just being able to put new equipment into their hands empowers them to develop a relationship with an instrument and a love of music.”

In 2013, TGF made generous donations of Schecter guitars and Mogami cables to Madison Monroe School No. 16, Robert Morris School No. 18, John Marshall School No. 20, and Ronald Reagan Academy School No. 30. TGF returned in 2014 to donate to Thomas Jefferson Arts Academy, John E. Dwyer Technology Academy, Elizabeth High School, and Jerome Dunn Academy School No. 9.

One of the artists appearing with Marks will be:

Rachel Lorin - High School Musical

Rachel Lorin is a NYC singer/songwriter/actress/model who was recently featured on a track with Pitbull. She starred on Oxygen's The Next Big Thing and toured with Disney's High School Musical 1 & 2 stage productions. She has a new edm single 'Sinsational' being released by Universal in a couple of weeks. Even though she got her start in dance/pop music, her real love is rock. She is currently working with a new band, recording her first rock album, and performing at various venues throughout NY.

"I am so thrilled to be a part of The Traveling Guitar Foundation and bringing live music to the schools. There is nothing better than seeing big smiles on the faces of children of all ages and watching them jam along with us. Music has always been a big part of my life and is a great outlet for kids to express themselves. Can't thank Damon enough for letting me be a part of such an awesome cause. Rock on!"

Schecter Guitars President Michael Ciravolo said: "We are proud to partner with Damon and his Foundation. He is doing some really great things. Kids, Pets and Vets are close and dear to our hearts here at Schecter, so when he approached us to be a part ...we happily jumped in!"

Loren Molinare, Blackstar's US Product Manager said: "It is so important for schools to not let go of their music and arts programs and Blackstar is proud to support Damon's music education advocacy work with the Traveling Guitar Foundation. Music opens up pathways to creative thinking, helps students gain confidence and sharpens their ability to listen, collaborate and focus, all qualities that will help them be successful in the classroom and beyond."

Elizabeth Board of Education President Ana Maria Amin is pleased that the Traveling Guitar Foundation has chosen to return to the Elizabeth Public Schools to inspire students with the gift of music.

"We are very pleased that Damon Marks and the Traveling Guitar Foundation will be returning for the third year in a row to make substantial donations to music programs in our district," said Amin. "Thanks to the generosity of Mr. Marks, TGF, and TGF's sponsors, many of our music programs have been positively impacted and countless students have been inspired to enrich their lives through music."

For further information on Elizabeth Public Schools please visit www.epsnj.org.

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The Importance of Music Education In Schools:

Music participation provides a unique opportunity for literacy preparation. Playing instruments and adding movement to the lessons teaches children about sequential learning which is essential in reading comprehension. A recent study from the University of California found that music trains the brain for higher forms of thinking. Second graders who were given music lessons scored 27% higher on proportional math and fractions tests than children who received no special instruction. Research indicates that musical training permanently wires a young mind for enhanced performance and intellectual growth.

About Traveling Guitar Founder Damon Marks:

Damon Marks began playing the guitar passionately when he was ten years old. Since a young age, Damon has utilized his musical abilities in tandem with his impressive business acumen to achieve tremendous success in the music industry. Throughout his career, Damon has worked with a diverse range of very notable celebrity artists.

In 2008, Damon helped launch the female-fronted national rock band, Lipstick Magazine. Besides recording the guitar tracks on the album, Damon recruited long time friends Tommy Aldrich (Ozzy, Whitesnake) on drums and Marco Mendoza (Whitesnake, Thin Lizzy) on bass guitar. Damon co-produced the band's debut album, *Skin Deep*, alongside Grammy Award winning recording engineer and Multi-platinum producer Mike Plotnikoff. Damon also helped orchestrate the worldwide release of, *Skin Deep*. In support of the album, Lipstick Magazine undertook a national tour in which they opened for heavy metal icons such as Sebastian Bach, Extreme, Yes, Ratt, and Winger to name a few.

In 2009 Damon graced the stage for a solo performance with Bret Michaels performing Poison's smash hit "Talk Dirty To Me" to a sold out crowd in Allentown, PA.

In early 2010, Damon played guitar for R&B recording artist and winner of NBC's *Season Two* of "The Voice", Jermaine Paul, the opening act on Alicia Keys "Freedom Tour". As a part of the tour, Damon played in numerous world-renowned arenas such as Madison Square Garden. In 2013, Damon went on his first celebrity USO tour to Ramstein Airbase in Germany where he performed for and donated twenty new guitars to wounded warriors at seven military installations and military schools.

In 2010, Damon founded the Traveling Guitar Foundation. The Traveling Guitar Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that works to ensure that school children have access to high-quality musical instruments and instruction during a time when school systems across the country are facing budgetary restraints. Damon a New Jersey native has shown special interest in the school systems in and around the state of New Jersey where he was raised and did all his schooling. Through the Traveling Guitar Foundation he has funded seventeen schools in his home state most recently funding eight schools in the city of Elizabeth, NJ where in October 2014 Damon received a street sign in his name from Elizabeth Mayor Chris Bollwage, and in January 2015 a letter of recognition from New Jersey Governor Chris Christie. Initially, the Foundation established a substantial presence in the New York tri state area. However, the Foundation's profile has grown to an international level, with in school musical equipment donations and clinics taking place all over the country and abroad. Due to its extreme importance, the artists Damon has relations with and played guitar for have given major support

to Traveling Guitar Foundation. Artists like Alicia Keys, Swizz Beatz, Daryl "DMC" McDaniell, Heart, Melanie Fiona, Leon Thomas III, Ariana Grande, Mike Reid, Victoria Justice, Mariah Carey, Michael Bolton and Rick Springfield. Moreover, superstar athletes such as Allan Houston, David Tyree, Alonzo Mourning and Dikembe Mutombo have also taken notice of the Foundation's mission and work. To date the Traveling Guitar Foundation has donated over 400 new guitars, various types of percussion; instrument cables and amplifiers positively impacting over 30,000 students in over 100 schools throughout the USA and abroad

The Traveling Guitar Foundation has secured and maintained sponsorships with Schecter Guitars, Burbank Marriott Hotel, Guitar Center, Conn-Selmer, Mogami Cable, EMG Pickups and Blackstar Amplifiers.

You can learn more about The Traveling Guitar Foundation by visiting www.travelingguitarfoundation.org.