

Fall Newsletter

2023

Ordinary kids transformed by an
extraordinary musical experience since 1993

★ BiG
★ GiG

★ April 21,
★ 2024 ★

★ 2PM ★

★ The Brown Theatre ★

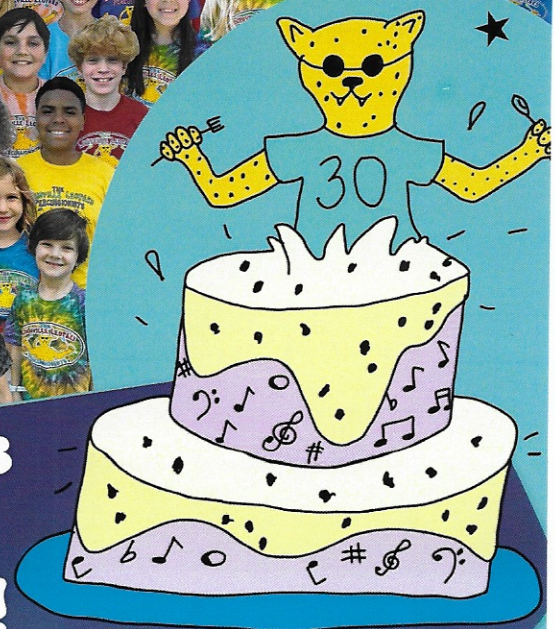
**Great things
are happening
with The
Leopards!**

**We're so
excited to
share all our
great news
with you!**



1993-2023

It's our 30th birthday!





Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Elementary School, Louisville, KY, 1993

Thirty years ago, in room 308 on the 3rd floor of King Elementary School, The Leopards embarked on an extraordinary journey. What began with a classroom of 24 kids has blossomed into a movement involving thousands of young performers, with shows spanning across the eastern United States. From stumbling upon a stack of small percussion instruments in a closet, we could never have anticipated that this humble beginning would lead us to becoming an internationally renowned force in the world of youth percussion.



Over these three decades, The Leopards have not only had remarkable growth and transformation but have also inspired other music educators to establish similar groups.

Our influence now extends to places like Texas, California, Virginia, Arkansas, New York, and South Carolina, spreading the powerful message of what young minds can achieve in music.



Our principal,
Mae Kennerly
1952-2002



Scan this code to see the history of our group.



**S O U
A R T S
H**



We are so excited to share that we've been granted a Jazz Road Creative Residencies grant through South Arts! This exciting opportunity will allow us to immerse ourselves in the world of jazz and later travel to the Atlanta area to showcase our repertoire to new audiences. South Arts is dedicated to empowering artists, organizations, and communities, and increasing access to arts and culture.



Impact100
Louisville

We are incredibly grateful and honored to have received a generous grant from Impact 100 Louisville,

which allows us to further our mission and reach even more children in the Louisville area. With this funding, we've been able to acquire additional instruments, enriching our offerings and expanding our programming to launch an exciting new initiative. In a wonderful collaboration, we've partnered with another Impact grant recipient to return to our inaugural location at King Elementary and establish Leopard Learners, bringing the magic of music back to where it all began. This endeavor promises to be an exciting new chapter in our journey.

Impact 100 is a community of women changing lives through collective giving. Impact 100 exists to empower women to award large grants that transform lives.



Scan this code to donate to, join, or learn more about Impact 100!



Leopard kids come from 83 different schools!

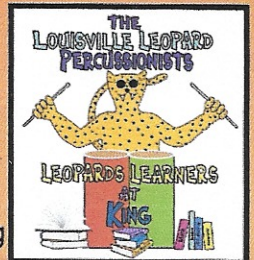
We have kids from 34 different zip codes!



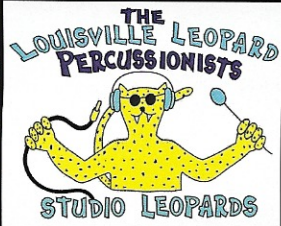
We are thrilled to announce our exciting partnership with The Decode Project, leading to the launch of our new program - Leopard Learners! This collaboration aims to inspire King Elementary students by incorporating thirty minutes of music prior to thirty minutes of tutoring, enhancing the effectiveness of the learning process. This innovative approach is rooted in the longstanding belief that engaging

in music can stimulate the brain, creating a more receptive environment for education. When kids possess strong literacy skills and the confidence to believe in themselves and their ideas, they hold the transformative power to shape society. The Decode Project, with its focus on students who require structured literacy support, ensures that even those who are often overlooked receive a solid foundation in literacy - a vital element for promoting equity and inclusivity.

An additional exciting aspect of this project is that all the instruments we began with are still housed at King, eagerly awaiting their chance to be played once more. The prospect of returning to our roots and rekindling the musical spirit within the halls of King Elementary fills us with great excitement and joy!

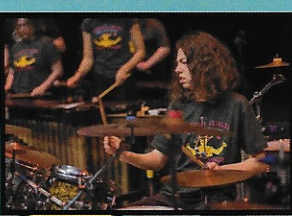


Scan to learn more about the Decode Project.



Our Studio Leopards have had an exciting year. Each Tuesday they serve as DJs on WXOX radio, blending genres, styles, and decades to curate their own eclectic set list, each member contributing their unique flavor to the mix. Tune in every Tuesday to hear a diverse mix of rock, indie, hip hop, and jazz, as well as local bands. WXOX is a noncommercial radio station dedicated to providing artists and community members access to the airwaves for creative and experimental use.

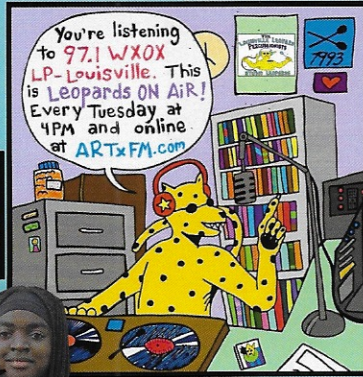
Our Studio Leopards not only graced the airwaves but also wowed the audience with a high-level rendition of "Roundabout" by Yes at our 2023 BiG GiG.



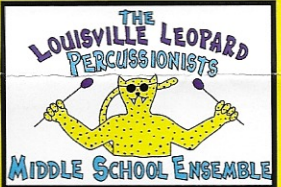
I'm a senior and have been in the group for 11 years! Leopards is very cool and it's been real.



I've been in the group for 10 years. I've met a lot of friends, learned new kinds of music, been to a lot of cool places and met some really cool people.



Scan for "Roundabout"



Our Middle School Ensemble had another strong year. They were one of the highlights of our annual BiG GiG when they performed a circus playing "Entry of the Gladiators", complete with juggling, magic tricks, and ring masters! Additionally, they accompanied our special guest, Carly Johnson on her song, "Demons".

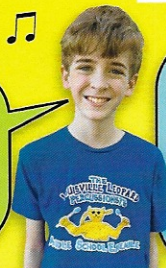
This season they are already busy preparing pieces for their 2 upcoming concerts as well as our BiG GiG.



See their circus here.



Leopards is a good community where you can learn to play music well.

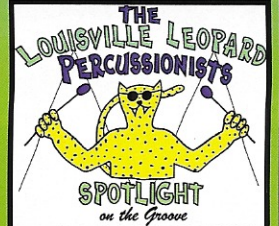


Being in Leopards got me interested in playing piano. I thought, "Hey xylophone is almost the same as piano, I just have to move my fingers."



Scene 7

Seven of our talented young musicians have come together to create their own band, aptly named Scene 7! Taking charge of their musical direction, they've selected their own repertoire and arranged their own tunes. They have taken the stage at renowned venues like The Speed Museum, Mike Linnigs, and even a Louisville Roller Derby Match. Let us know if you're



Our Spotlight on the Groove groups delivered outstanding performances at our annual BiG GiG. These talented musicians spent the season learning all about the blues and mastering songs in this iconic genre.

Our 2/3 group performed "Should I Stay or Should I Go" by the Clash and our 4/5 group performed "Kentucky Oysters" by David Baker. The 4/5 group also accompanied special guest Carly Johnson on her composition, "Hit the Ground Running."



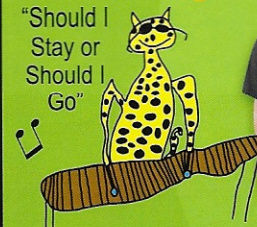
This season, our Spotlight groups will focus on all genres of music and learn a broad variety of tunes. In addition to performing at our annual BiG GiG, both groups will join our Middle School Ensemble and World Drumming Friday groups to showcase their talents in two dedicated concerts of their very own.



Scan for "Kentucky Oysters"



Scan for "Should I Stay or Should I Go"

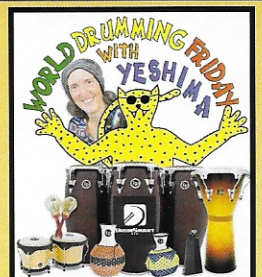


Being in Spotlight on the Groove is a really good experience to do because it makes me feel like I belong in music. It helps me feel related to music.

I like being in Leopards because I like making music and it makes my ears feel good.



Our World Drumming Friday group had 2 exciting performances last season. In the fall, they performed an African welcome song at Kentucky to the World's presentation of The State of the State Song. In the spring they were part of The Louisville Orchestra's presentation of Louisville Broadcast. WDF is led by Yeshima, of DrumSmart.



Scan for "Kentucky to the World"



Scan for "Louisville Broadcast"





Our annual BIG GiG this past season was an absolute blast! We had over 165 kids on stage spread across 8 different groups. We all came together for the final two songs, for a spectacular finale. ★



We were truly honored to have the incredibly talented Carly Johnson grace our stage as our special guest. A beloved figure in Louisville, Carly collaborated with our musicians and even invited 7th grader MV to sing with her for a memorable performance! ★ ★ ★



Each year our Beginners write a story then put it to music. This year, Carly was the star of our story, The Swticharoo.



Being in Steel Leopards . . .

It's entertaining. The songs are really fun to play and I like the gigs.

It's easier for me to learn the songs on pans than mallets.

It's really enjoyable. I like being able to play lots of gigs. We're a little older and we have more responsibility.

It's a big shift from mallet instruments. Pans sound way cooler and different.



Teachers

Laura Barnhorst

Elijah Smith * Dani Markham

Luke Anderson * Diane Downs

Pete Jones * Wes Greer * Allison Cross

Demon Smith * Yeshima * Zoey Mullins

Mikayla Cater * Tank Stinson * Zero

Cash Doyle * Alex Gillespie * Ella Geissler

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John Scruton, Adam Loewy



Go here to see the video of our Beginner original, "The Swticharoo", featuring Carly Johnson!



Scan to see our BIG GiG finale, "Power of Love" featuring all of our Leopard groups on stage together!



Yeshima from DrumSmart LLC offered an engaging, hands-on experience for 2nd and 3rd graders. They delved into group drumming, mindfulness, singing, and movement, with a strong emphasis on nurturing their social and emotional skills. The participants even had the chance to compose songs rooted in their emotions and acquired valuable calming techniques applicable to real-life scenarios.

Our Leopard Summer Drum Camps were great! We served over 260 kids during our 4 weeks of camp! Campers attended classes on drum set, hand drums, mallet percussion and percussion accessories. Many camp participants signed up to join one of our year-round programs this season.



If you would like to attend our 2024 Summer Drum Camp, check our website in February for registration!



CULTURAL PASS

Cultural Pass, a program that invites participants to embark on a journey of creativity. This initiative grants children free access to a wide array of arts and cultural activities at over 50 prestigious venues in Louisville throughout the summer. This invaluable opportunity not only allowed us to forge connections with new families but also introduced some to our summer camps and year-round groups.

Once again, we participated in The Fund for the Arts'



This past August, some of our young musicians took part in a unique collaboration with the Louisville Ballet and Kentucky Shakespeare, providing the musical accompaniment for "Lady M," a captivating rendition of the Macbeth story. This exceptional performance took place over 5 evenings in



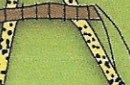
Louisville's Central Park.



I am both a teacher and a performer. Being a teacher, I have to make sure the kids know what they're doing and that they know the right notes.

Being a performer I have to make sure that I'm sticking together with the other members and not overpowering anybody else.

We played 14 gigs last season including The Belknap Festival, Lou City soccer game, Fox Hollow Farm, the Make-A-Wish Walk at Kentucky Kingdom, a UofL men's basketball game, and our annual BIG GiG at the Brown Theatre!



Leopards is like a safe place. No one is mean if someone looks different or if they act different. If you're feeling upset or something, you can just come to rehearsal.

Leopards is awesome because the teachers make sure you never give up.

I love being a Leopard! It's very fun. It never gets boring. We have the best teachers in the whole world. Everyone is very nice. Hard work = great work I just love it!

How did your very first gig go?

When I was on my way to the gig I was very scared but when I started playing, I felt better and it was really fun.

It was a little nerve-racking when I thought about it, but it turned out really well. I felt good.

When I was playing my solo, the bar popped off the bells but I kept playing!

I did well because I practiced at home on the piano.

I tried my hardest to play all the notes correctly.

If you would like to book us for a gig, email us at leopardpercussionists@gmail.com.

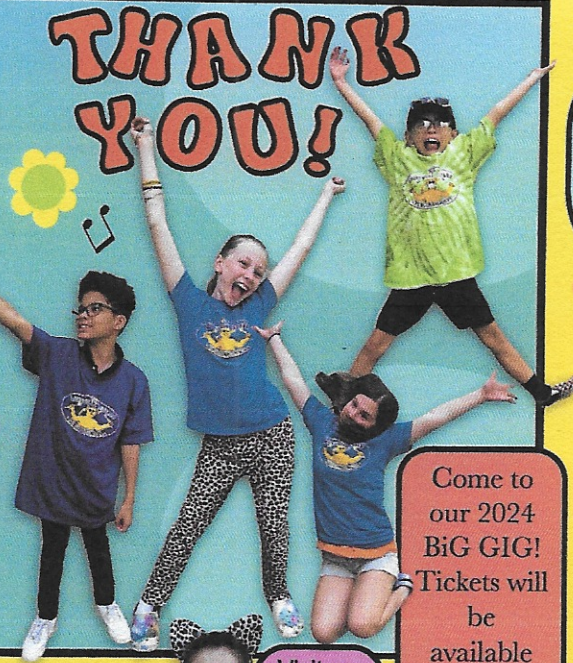
We can play festivals, celebrations, private events, concerts, ... wherever you need music!

We have large and small groups that can perform!



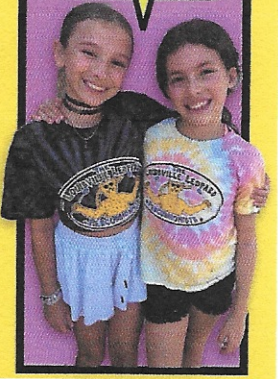
Thanks to everyone who has supported us throughout the year. Your generosity is greatly appreciated. If you'd like to support our group, here are some ways you can help.

THANK YOU!



Contact us if you're interested in sponsoring a scholarship for a Leopard kid.

We love requests! Let us know if you have any song suggestions for us!



Come to our 2024 BiG GIG! Tickets will be available online and at the door!



Please consider making a donation so we can continue to offer local kids an extraordinary musical experience. We are a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, so all donations are tax deductible!

Visit us on social media.

Check our upcoming gigs on our website and come see us play!

Please register your Kroger Plus Card in their Community Rewards Program and designate us as your beneficiary.

Scan the QR code or go to kroger.com/communityrewards. Enter your Kroger Plus number, input Louisville Leopard Percussionists or our number IG431.

Every time you use your Kroger Card, we receive a donation from Kroger!



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Visit our website at www.leopardmusic.org

Watch and share our YouTube videos.

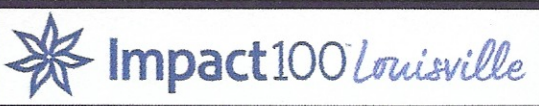
Search Leopard Percussionists or, scan the QR codes.



@louleopardperc



BiG Thanks to all these amazing organizations that always make sure we have everything we need!



James & Patricia Ratterman Family Foundation



The Estate of Patricia Mears



Fred B and Opal S Woosley Foundation Inc

THE GHEENS FOUNDATION



Ordinary kids transformed by an extraordinary musical experience since 1993

Thirty years ago, the Louisville Leopard Percussionists began with a closet full of old percussion instruments and a second-grade classroom full of restless students. Fast forward to the 2023-24 season, and this nonprofit is currently engaging 171 students and supporting 15 teachers and staff. During its three decades of tremendous growth, the organization has sparked and nourished a love of music in thousands of Louisville-area kids — including my own.

It has been such a joy to play even a small part in supporting a group where kids can be kids, where they are embraced for who they are, and where ordinary kids are given the opportunity to have extraordinary experiences.

Since Diane Downs started the Louisville Leopard Percussionists in 1993 by creating a unique form of music performance and education, the magic continues. It flourishes today thanks to all Leopards, past and present, teachers, staff, families, and of course, the many fans around the world.

With more than 54,000 Facebook followers, 10 million+ views on our YouTube channel with 13,900 subscribers, this group is rooted firmly in the business of sharing music with young people and showing the world what kids are capable of when invited to participate, lead, and create. It's an exciting time for the Louisville Leopard Percussionists. It's also never been more important to provide spaces that bring people — especially young people — together.

Please consider a financial gift in celebration of our 30 years. With your support, we can secure the foundation for Louisville's Leopards both now and those yet to come. As a small non-profit, every dollar helps.

Leopards for Life!

Tricia Williams
President, Board of Directors
Louisville Leopard Percussionists



We are celebrating three decades of musical excellence! Never did we imagine that our journey would encompass so many amazing experiences for our musicians.



We've been so fortunate in the past 30 years. We have received global recognition for our hard work, from being featured in an HBO documentary to warming up the stage for legendary musicians Chick Corea, Jack DeJohnette, and Eddie Gomez and twice for My Morning Jacket. Our appearance on "Ozzy & Jack's World Detour" brought us to an even broader audience. Our rendition of a Led Zeppelin medley earned accolades from none other than Jimmy Page, Robert Plant, and John Paul Jones themselves! We have even had the honor of performing for distinguished figures like Coretta Scott King, Wynton Marsalis, and Prince Charles.



We have played all over the Eastern United States including appearances at The Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland, a TedX convention in Kansas City, and lots of state and national music education conferences. We have played in cities such as Chicago, New York City, Nashville, Orlando, New Orleans, Washington, DC, and so many more.



Recently we have come full circle, returning to our original home at King Elementary. This reunion is a special moment in our journey and we're thrilled to be back where we began.



Behind this extraordinary group stands a team of highly qualified educators, including music therapists, seasoned musicians, and dedicated college students. Guided by the expertise of Pete Jones, Luke Anderson, Elijah Smith, Laura Barnhorst, Allison Cross, Wes Greer, Dani Markham, Demond Smith, and Yeshima, The Louisville Leopard Percussionists continue to provide our young musicians with a rich and substantial musical education, transforming ordinary kids through an extraordinary musical experience since 1993.



Diane Downs.
Founder & Artistic Director of
The Louisville Leopard Percussionists