

# 2025 Fall Newsletter

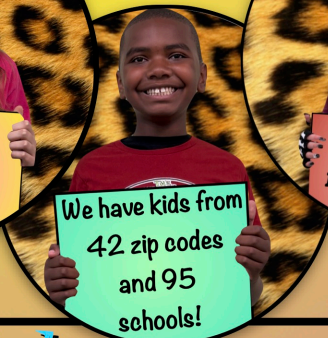
Welcome to our 2025 Fall Newsletter!  
We're thrilled to share highlights from an incredible past season and give you a sneak peek at all the exciting things in store for the months ahead.



Mark Your Calendar!  
**Big GiG 2026**  
Sunday, May 10th,  
2PM at the  
Brown Theatre!



**Big GiG 2025**



## How it all started...



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



Scan this code to see how it all started.



Thirty two years ago at ML King Jr. Elementary School in West Louisville, the Leopards embarked on an extraordinary journey. What began as The Fabulous Leopard Percussionists 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 discovering 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 has expanded to places like Texas, California, Virginia, Arkansas, New York, and South Carolina, spreading the powerful message of what young minds can achieve through music.





We are thrilled to be returning to Chicago this coming December to perform at The Midwest Clinic after 25 years! The Midwest Clinic International Band and Orchestra Conference is one of the world's most

prestigious gatherings for musicians and music educators, offering an incredible array of clinics, exhibits, and opportunities to learn from leading voices in the field. With more than 18,000 attendees from all 50 states and over 40 countries, the conference provides an unmatched chance to connect, share ideas, and celebrate the future of music education. We are especially honored that our Beginner and Advanced ensembles will be presenting a clinic on our unconventional, but highly successful, approach to learning. If you'd like to support our journey, please consider making a donation.



Our 2000 performance at The Midwest Clinic included special guests Jerry Steinholtz, Ruben Alvarez, and Dave Samuels.

## How we feel about going to Chicago ...



I'm so excited for the opportunity to perform in front of so many important people!

I've never gone to a different state with my friends on a bus before. Plus, I love cold weather.



I've never been to Chicago.

This is my first time playing a national gig. I am a little nervous because there are going to be a whole lot of people and I'm excited because it's a new opportunity for me.



Performing at the Midwest Clinic will look good on my resume.



## Welcome Back Ashley!

We are thrilled to welcome Leopard alum Ashley Wilder back to our team as a teacher!

Ashley grew up in our program as a member of Leopards Lite and the Steel Leopards before majoring in music in college and becoming a JCPS music teacher. We're so happy to have her return—this time as part of our teaching staff working with our L.E.A.P. groups!

## Leopard Teachers

Ella Anderson  
Allison Cross  
Diane Downs  
Wes Greer  
Pete Jones  
Dani Markham

Max Neblett  
Jackie Royce  
Demond Smith  
Elijah Smith  
Ashley Wilder

## Thanks Zoey!

We were so sad to say goodbye to one of our favorite teachers, Zoey Mullins, as she moved away to a new job in music therapy. We're so grateful for all the hard work and heart she gave our L.E.A.P. groups last season. We miss her dearly, but we love that she still checks in with us often!



## Summer Camp Teachers

Mason Allen Dan Dorff  
Kelsey Lee David Williams

## Teacher Assistants

Zachary Beck Jo Brown

## Board of Directors

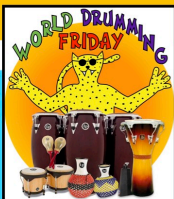
Tricia Williams (P)  
Devon Woodlee (VP)  
Candace Curtis (S)  
Trent Stigler (T)  
Colleen Conley

Diane Downs  
Taylor Garver  
Patrick Hallahan  
Peter Tower  
Laura Wheeler  
Lisa Willner

John Scruton, legal  
Caroline Taylor, Operations Director



We're excited to share that we have begun a new partnership with Americana World Community Center! Each week, we bring hand drumming classes to their community, modeled after our World Drumming Friday groups. It's been so much fun making music together and building new friendships along the way.



Our World Drumming Friday group is going strong and diving into some exciting new rhythms! If you have a 2nd–8th grader who would like to join, registration is now open on our website under the *Programs* tab or scan this code.





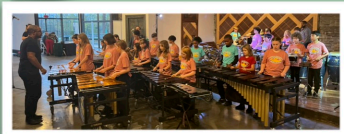
# We played some great gigs last season!



I got kinda nervous when we played our gigs but they were great. I liked hanging out with my friends at the gigs too.



It's fun to perform but sometimes people get nervous. It's okay to get nervous. You just have to do it and it will be over.



On a snowy November morning, our Beginner and Advanced groups woke up early to perform at the YMCA's Community Thanksgiving Breakfast, featuring Louisville Mayor Craig Greenberg. Before our performance, we were treated to muffins and juice - then it was off to school!



Last February, our Advanced and Beginner groups had the honor of presenting a clinic at the Kentucky State Music Education Association Conference. We shared our unique approach to learning with Kentucky music teachers, offering alternative strategies to engage their students. Using examples, we demonstrated how word phrases can make complex rhythms more accessible and how simplified parts can be layered to create the sound of intricate music. Our goal was to inspire band directors to explore new ways of connecting with their students.



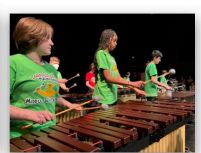
When you play gigs, at first you feel worried that you're not going to succeed but once you have the urge to play, you get up on stage and shine like a shining star. After that, you hear crowds clapping not just for the group, but for you, too. That makes you feel good because you feel like a hero.



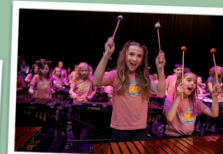
Playing gigs is really fun. I was really nervous at first but the more gigs we played, the less nervous I got because I got the hang of it and gigs became more fun. I've been playing for 5 years now and I've gained a lot of experience and gigs have really gotten me out of my shell.



Our Middle School Ensemble, World Drumming Friday, L.E.A.P. groups, and Home School groups came together to present two showcase concerts last season. We are so proud of the incredible music they learned in such a short time! These groups will once again share their showcase concerts this coming December and March. Check the Gigs tab on our website for details.



Our annual **BiG GiG** is the highlight of our season - a celebration of all the hard work our students put in throughout the year, held each spring at the Brown Theatre. If you missed past BiG GiGs, you can catch up on our YouTube channel, where we've posted videos of all our groups. Mark your calendar now for our **2026 BiG GiG on May 10th - Mother's Day!** Bring your mom and enjoy an unforgettable afternoon of great music.



We're thrilled to share that we won **FIRST PLACE** in *Leo Magazine's* 2025 Readers' Choice Awards in **TWO** categories - Best Performing Arts Group AND Best Cover Band! It's an incredible honor to receive this recognition, and we're so grateful for the community support that made it possible.





This past summer, our percussion camp brought together 222 second-eighth graders from across our community to learn, play, and grow through music. Students participated in classes on drum set, hand drums, mallet instruments, and percussion accessories in a fun, hands-on environment while building teamwork, creativity, and confidence. The week culminated in a show & tell performance showcasing their hard work and new skills! Many of our camp kids signed up for our school year programs.

If you have a child entering 2nd-8th grade next fall, check our website in mid-February for camp registration information.



My mom signed me up for summer camp. We played drums, toys, and hand drums. After five days we did a performance and then I was invited to

join the main performing group. I'm in the Beginner group. It's going really good. Beginner class with Ms. Jackie is really fun.

I liked summer camp because you get to play all the instruments and it's a good experience if you've never played an instrument before.

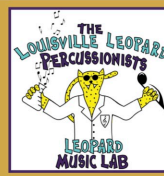


Drum set class is really fun. We learn different drum beats and play some really cool things.

Our group drum set classes have been a blast! In this program, kids focus exclusively on drum set, learning a wide variety of grooves that let them play along with their favorite songs. Some have even taken their skills to the next level by performing with their school ensembles!

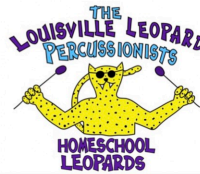


GROUP DRUM SET CLASS

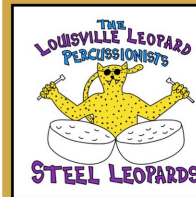


Last season, our Leopard Music Lab students focused on music theory, technique, improvisation, arranging, and collective musicianship. Using these skills, they directed, produced, and recorded two videos, showcasing the songs they perfected. Both videos are available to watch on YouTube.

See videos here



Last season we launched a new ensemble—the Home School Leopard group! These young musicians explored different areas of percussion and even composed their own blues tune. They performed at both our Winter and Spring Showcase Concerts, playing on their own as well as joining forces with our World Drumming Friday group. If you know a home school student who might enjoy this experience, we'd love to meet them!



Our Steel Leopard groups had an outstanding season! With their

advanced musicianship and strong grasp of our teaching style, they learned more songs than ever before. Once again, they kicked off our annual BiG GiG with the opening number, setting the stage for all our other ensembles. This season, they're going strong and gearing

up for even more public performances. Stay tuned for videos!



This is my 7th year in the Leopards. For me, it's not so much about the quality of the music you make, but it's more about the quality of experiences you have with the other members.



The CulturalPass  
May 31 - August 10, 2025  
culturalpass.app

For the fourth year in a row, we participated in the Fund for the Arts Cultural Pass! Our Steel Leopards kicked things off with a performance at the Downtown Public Library, and throughout June we hosted drum circles twice a week - engaging more than 200 people!





Random things we love about Leopards...



Woods Parties!



Ice Cream Pig Out!



Supporting our friends!



Kids vs Grown-ups kick ball game!



Snacks!



Our Leopard Cubs!



Comfy Couches!



Dance Parties!



Naps!

Popsicles!

Kid Talk



Before Leopards I played piano but I very much disliked it. Leopards has changed my mind that playing music isn't super hard, but there are hard parts about it.

Leopards isn't just music. We learn cultural diversity too. We play songs from different cultures, like on hand drums we learn songs from Africa.

You're not just learning music in Leopards. You also learn about other people because of all the time we spend together in rehearsals and the talking that goes on. When we talk with each other, we can learn about each other's lives and that allows us to be more diverse, responsible citizens.

Leopards is a music place where you can play instruments. If you want to be a music star or be in a band when you grow up, Leopards can help you.

When I first came to Leopards, it made me proud and made me want to listen to more music and study music. The teachers in Leopards teach me how to play piano and xylophone.

If you're interested in playing drums, piano, hand drums, xylophone, surdo drums, cajon, ... you can learn them at Leopards.



Leopards has taught me how to be a good leader and to be responsible for stuff that I may not want to be responsible for or that I wasn't responsible for to start with.

Leopards has changed how I listen to music. If I had never been in Leopards I probably wouldn't listen to jazz. Some of the people I like to listen to are Robert Glasper, Bobby Caldwell, and Gregg Karukas. One day I would like to be a drum set player like my cousin DeAven (a Leopard alum now attending Berklee College of Music) or a DJ and rapper like my Uncle Mason (another Leopard alum living in LA).



I really like being a Leopard. You get to learn a lot of music and how to play a lot of instruments and it's just really fun.





# How you can help . . .

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.



Tune in to our weekly radio show on WXOX!

Email us at [leopardpercussionists@gmail.com](mailto:leopardpercussionists@gmail.com)

**YouTube**  
Scan the QR codes to see our videos on YouTube.



Let us know if you have any song suggestions for us!

Please consider becoming a **monthly donor**. Even \$5 per month will make a difference for our group. Go to our website for details.

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

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](http://kroger.com/communityrewards)
- enter your Kroger Plus number
- select Louisville Leopard Percussionists or our number IG431

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



Join one of our groups! Scan this code to find out ways you can join one of our programs.



Follow us on social media.



Please consider making a donation so we can continue to offer local kids an extraordinary musical experience. We are a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, so all donations to The Leopards are tax deductible. Visit our website at [www.leopardmusic.org](http://www.leopardmusic.org)

Visit our website.



Come see us play. Check our website for showtimes.

## Big Thanks to these generous supporters!



THE GHEENS FOUNDATION

Fred R & Opal S Woosley Foundation

PANTOJA

