

Valley Pre-School students take musical voyage

By Andrea Burns

The four-year-old classes at Valley Pre-School went on a musical journey around the world during a percussion concert at the school in March.

With the beats of Ben Toth, chairman of the percussion department at the University of Hartford Hartt School of Music, and his son Ben Toth Jr., a former Valley Pre-School student, the children traveled to places like Japan for a battle of the Samurai, to Serbia for a dance, and to Africa for a party.

Before playing each song, Toth described the instruments and told the students where the songs originated.

“I love coming back to Valley Pre-School and performing with my son,” Toth said. “I know cultural studies are an important part of the Valley experience, and the teachers always do a great job of prepping the students before the concert about some of the things they will see and hear.”

One of the ways the students prepared for the concert was by creating their own percussion instruments, which they used to accompany Toth Sr. and Toth Jr. during the last song of the show.

“I think this concert is a fun, engaging way to teach students some of the fundamentals of music,” said Mara Henze, chair of the Valley Pre-School board of directors. “It gives the children a hands-on experience with music and shows how music is a part of people’s lives all over the world.”

At the event, made possible by the Granby Education Foundation, the students learned the three ways to play percussion instruments, which include striking, scraping or shaking. They also discovered some things people use to create instruments such as a hollow tree and goatskin for an African drum, and an old oil barrel for a steel drum. Toth Jr. even demonstrated how household items such as spoons could be used to make music.

Toth Jr., now a history major in college, said he welcomes the opportunity to return to his musical roots and visit his old school. “I really enjoy coming to Valley, seeing some of my former teachers and sharing my love of music with the students.”

Valley Pre-School is now accepting applications for the 2014-2015 school year. For more information, call (860) 653-3641, or visit www.valleypreschoolinfo.org.