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Press Release

From: Silver Bay YMCA Conference and Family Retreat Center

### **Local nonprofits team up to offer music education**

*Instrument Petting Zoo an exciting success*

Silver Bay YMCA proudly welcomed the Glens Falls Symphony Orchestra (GFS) to the stage in their Auditorium Saturday, July 29. The orchestra's performance was part of Silver Bay YMCA's Summer Concert Series and was one of the most well-attended shows this summer.

Before the concert began, GFS partnered with We Are Instrumental (WAI), a nonprofit that works to improve accessibility to musical education for children in Northern NY, to provide families and children with a hands-on experience with real instruments, this experience is referred to as an "Instrument Petting Zoo"

WAI's President Michael Iturrino and WAI's Founder/ Board Treasurer Evan Mack brought three students from Ticonderoga Junior-Senior High School to help with the petting zoo, Jennifer Brink the Executive Director said, "Michael Iturrino of the Ticonderoga school music program and Dr. Mack brought three outstanding music students from Ticonderoga Junior Senior School to assist in providing families and children an interactive, hands-on experience with real musical instruments prior to the Glens Falls Symphony concert on July 29."

Mack added, "Talented students from Ticonderoga came down to Silver Bay to excite its young patrons on what instruments can do. Little kids made all kinds of beautiful sounds and noises on the trumpet, trombone, and flute. A major benefit for our students was to see music again through a little kid's eyes!"

In addition to the Instrument Petting Zoo, the three students from Ticonderoga got to have one-on-one lessons with the world class professionals from the Glens Falls Symphony Orchestra.

Mack said, "During our visit, our Ticonderoga students got to have one-on-one lessons with world-class professionals from the Glens Falls Symphony and then experience their concert afterwards as an audience member."

“As part of our multiple goals for this project, the Ticonderoga students also were provided lessons with Glens Falls Symphony professionals. GFS musician Jessica Cunningham worked with student Audrey Cook (French horn), Alyssa Verheyen taught Deirdre Kleemann (percussion), and Peter Bellino gave a lesson to Isaac DeLong (trumpet),” said Brink.

WAI and GFS brought Silver Bay YMCA in as a partner on the project due to the location and resources of its campus.

“It was an idea between WAI and GF Symphony. We wanted to make sure our students could benefit by working with musicians since they were in a much closer location—improving access is our mission and the GF symphony and Jennifer are so great in sharing in that vision. Since they were up to Silver Bay, it was a perfect space to make it happen.” Mack said on how the petting zoo came to be.

Chet Lastowski, Silver Bay YMCA assistant vice president of campus and conference programs said, “It was fantastic to be able to have students from the Ticonderoga School District music program on site to show guests, young and old, how to play an array of instruments. The students that were here did a great job of instructing guests and encouraging them to try out any and all instruments.”

Since 2021, WAI and GFS have been finding more ways to work together to ensure North Country kids have access to enrichment and a more robust musical education.

“We Are Instrumental does an amazing job of supporting the music program and its students by providing instruments for students to use when they otherwise may not be able to have access to them,” Lastowski concluded.

Silver Bay YMCA is proud to be able to help partnerships like this come together and hopes to continue to create more programs like the Instrument Petting Zoo as well as help them grow and prosper in the future.

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**Our MISSION:** To foster relationships, strengthen communities and nurture spirit, mind, and body for all.

**Our IMPACT:** Because of Silver Bay YMCA, connections between people and family are stronger. People are more connected, respectful, and caring. They have the confidence to develop to their full potential and to positively impact the communities in which they work and live. As a result, communities are more dynamic, inclusive and diverse. As stewards of Lake George, we inspire people to be stewards of the environment while they are visiting our magnificent campus and in their home communities.