


Darwin Elementary Band Lands 'The Big One' With National Grant



By **Darryl Holliday** on September 20, 2013 7:52am | Updated on September 20, 2013 7:52am

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LOGAN SQUARE — Darwin Elementary's music teacher just landed "the big one" for his burgeoning young musicians: a [VH1 Save the Music](#) grant to the tune of \$30,000.

Students and staff gathered in the school's auditorium Thursday afternoon to accept the award from the VH1 Save the Music Foundation and

Houlihan's Restaurants. The prize for [Darwin Elementary](#), one of only two Chicago schools to receive the grant this year, is for musical instruments.

Darwin's music teacher, 25-year-old Joe Panganiban — "Mr. P" to students and staff — estimates he applied to 50 to 60 various grant organizations before landing the VH1 Save the Music Foundation grant.

"Before I came a year ago, there was no music program [at Darwin]," he said. "While others are closing down, we're actually growing our music program."

This grant brings Panganiban's tally to three in the last year, he said. The others scored 50 ukuleles and 30 guitars for Darwin band students.

According to Deniece Dykes, executive director at VH1's Save the Music Foundation, 48 schools nationwide received grants worth \$30,000 in 2013, all based on a number of factors including need, income, and space.



A total of \$2 million has gone to Chicago Public Schools, she said, with the help of Kansas City-based **Houlihan's Restaurants**, which has donated \$250,000 to the foundation since 2007.

More than 100 elementary students packed Darwin's auditorium to be presented with their award, which included a letter from Mayor Rahm Emanuel read by Darwin's principal, Mauricio Segovia, as well as a surprise visit from Tom Higgenson of the Plain White T's.

"I started writing my own songs as a kid and never gave up," Higgenson, a Chicago suburb native, told the kids. "If you believe in yourself and you love what you do, you're going to succeed."

Higgenson then signed dozens of Save the Music "Treble Makers" t-shirts as he was mobbed by screaming Darwin fans.

Panganiban said he hopes to continue to help his 600 students grow musically following the grant that will provide them with an array of instruments — and maybe, he said, the young musicians can perform in Canada next.

<http://www.dnainfo.com/chicago/20130920/logan-square/darwin-elementary-band-lands-big-one-with-national-grant>