

Franklin music store owners focused on educating youth

By Matthew Smahaj Staff Writer | Posted: Wednesday, November 2, 2016 2:13 am

Owners at the Porch Music Store in Franklin have created a new method to get members in the community involved with folk music.

Franklin residents Linda Henderson and Holly Gibbons opened the store in September, and they specialize in making homemade instruments made out of aluminum cans, cigar boxes, tin containers and wood.

"Even though we're a music store, we're really about educating, too," said Gibbons.

Through a variety of different workshops, they teach children how to create and play their own instruments in hopes of inspiring future musicians.

One of their more recent workshops was held at First Presbyterian Church in Franklin, where 22 children from Youth Alternatives learned how to build and play the canjo, an instrument made out of wood, an aluminum can and a guitar string.

"It's a good, low-cost instrument and a great place to start if they want to move on," said Henderson. "It's a tiny spark in their imagination."

Henderson and Gibbons recently received a \$1,271 grant from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts that will be used for workshops with fifth and sixth graders in Forest County School District.

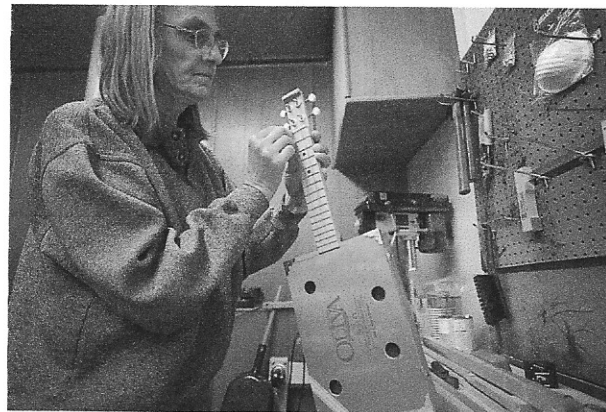
Gibbons said they are just starting to expand and are currently seeking funds to hold workshops in Venango County schools.

"In the future, we are hoping to reach out to other organizations like the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts," said Gibbons. "At the end of the day, we want to connect with the community."

The idea to open a store began in Oil City six years ago when Henderson would regularly play her guitar on her front porch. Eventually she wanted her neighbors to join her, and she began to look online for ways to build her own instruments at home.

"I've always enjoyed making and building things," said Henderson.

She started to make canjos for the first time, and soon her front porch became the regular spot for neighborhood jam sessions.



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Linda Henderson works on a cigar box ukulele in the back of the Porch Music Store on 13th Street in Franklin. (By Richard Sayer)

"Then we thought, wouldn't it be nice to have a music store?" Henderson said. "And now here we are."

The Porch Music Store holds jam sessions twice a month at the store. Henderson and Gibbons are encouraging musicians in the area to stop by with their instruments and play along.

"It isn't about us," said Henderson. "We want to draw local music in."

The store will host another workshop today with the children from Youth Alternatives in Franklin.