



All that jazz:

By REBECCA HATTAWAY

Robson Performing Arts Center's Black Box Theater will be transformed into a coffeehouse for "Jazz Fest," featuring the Will Rogers Junior High and Claremore High School jazz bands.

The event, sponsored by the Claremore Band Boosters Association, will be Monday, April 14, from 6 to 8 p.m.

"It will be a cabaret-type atmosphere with neat lighting and decorations" said Rod Clark, associate director of bands. "Refreshments will be served." Coffee will be provided by Starbucks, Java Dave's and Cappuccino Corner.

Also part of the evening will be a dessert auction, with sweets donated by band parents and local businesses.

Half the funds raised will go toward the junior high band program, the other half to the high school. Of course, the music will take center stage, showcasing the talent and hard work of the Will Rogers Junior High Jazz Band, and Claremore High School Jazz Ensemble and E Band.

All three bands are gearing up for the spring season of contests and performances.

"The two high school jazz bands have a pretty lengthy competitive season which begins now," Clark said.

The Jazz Ensemble — or "varsity" jazz band — earned third place in their class at the Green Country Jazz Festival in Tahlequah on March 3. They took first place in their class at the Azalea Jazz Festival in Muskogee. The E Band placed second.

The Jazz Ensemble, Concert Band and Winterguard will compete against groups from across the country in Dallas, April 18-20.

"They're doing really well," Clark said. "We're looking forward to the Dallas trip."

The WRJH Jazz Band also has a full slate, with performances at Claremore elementary schools in April and May.

"They've been a fantastic group to work with," said director Angela Hucceby who is in her first year with Claremore schools. "There's a lot of individual talent."

The Jazz Spring Concert for both the junior high and high school will be May 2 at 7 p.m. in the main auditorium of the Robson Performing Arts Center.

The Band Boosters raise money for the Claremore band programs through various fundraisers, including running the concession stand at football games and selling hoodies and Amish jams and jellies. Last fall, they participated in the Dodge Mega Cab giveaway, a fundraiser promotion for band organizations throughout the state. Sponsored by Melton Sales in Claremore and Oklahoma Dodge Dealers, the Claremore band raised \$8300 selling tickets for a drawing to win a Dodge Mega Cab.

"We pledged to raise \$15,000 toward new uniforms, and with all our fundraising they have now been ordered," Gunkel said.

The Band Boosters' next project will be a trailer to transport instruments and equipment to games, contests and performances.

"We hope to make the Jazz Fest an annual event," Gunkel said.

Tickets are \$3 and may be purchased from any band member or by calling the high school band office at 699-7307.

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Photos



Will Rogers Junior High Jazz Band