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## Performers for Progress a Generous Act

By Lou Fancher



From left: Miramonte sophomores and Performers for Progress performers Emma Patton, Amrita Newton, and Paige Powell. Photo provided

themselves; it is rare and so needed."

One hundred percent of the funds raised will go to respite care and a new program in which teen clients of the non-profit-many of whom did not receive appropriate modeling of child interactions themselves-are trained to care for young children enrolled in the program.

"Our teenagers have the possibility of giving back in a way in which they are uniquely qualified, i.e., in the setting in which they received healing: working with young children who are now suffering in the same way they once were," Cole explained.

Although Schmidt and her fellow performers never meet the people living at the other end of the group's generosity, they keep close tabs on how the \$4,000 they raise bi-annually will be spent.

"Our donation will be used for transportation for the teens, food, materials for the training and a small stipend of \$25 for each teen," Schmidt reported.

Cole said her organization is using the next few years to focus intensively on family support services. A property in San Leandro provides housing and daily programs; trained staff members make home visits in the West Oakland communities that constitute their primary area of service. Ninety children and 32 families currently receive weekly to monthly assistance.

Based on principles introduced by Rudolf Steiner, founder of the Waldorf School, Cole's decades-long work with families emphasizes individuality, self-expression and the humanity often discovered through artistic reflection.

"Participating in artistic work in a trusted environment is freeing and gives them joy as well as a starting point for conversation regarding the big questions and issues in their lives," Cole said.

Although speaking of teens in The Sophia Project, she could as likely have been referring to the students at MHS.

"I'm always blown away by the commitment, talent, and passion of all the students involved," Schmidt said. "I love Performers for Progress because it allows me to help others and raise money through something I love: performing."

Performers for Progress hopes to expand by traveling to local schools and eventually, obtaining 501C3 status of their own. Tickets will be available at the Miramonte Theater door: \$6 Student, \$12 Adult. For more information, you can email [perforpro@gmail.com](mailto:perforpro@gmail.com).

How often do high school students perform miraculous acts of generosity for complete strangers? At Miramonte High School in Orinda, the answer is twice a year.

Performers for Progress presents student-run-performed-produced cabaret-style shows each fall and spring. Different charities are chosen, with a special effort made to select underfunded, under-the-radar non-profits.

Cecily Schmidt and Sarah Brovelli are co-producers of the 19-act show that will run April 12 and 13 at 7:30 p.m. in the Miramonte High School Theater.

"The show is a full scale production," Schmidt wrote, sending her replies via e-mail while traveling during the school's spring break.

An impressive list, including poetry readings, Chopin Etudes, comedy sketches, jazz bands and choral ensembles demonstrates the range of talent and the overwhelming commitment of teens helping teens.

The Sophia Project, an Oakland-based family support operation that assists children and families at risk of recurring homelessness through a variety of services, was chosen by this year's co-producers.

"[We looked] for a cause we are passionate about," Schmidt said. "Producers in the past have focused on health and education, but we focused on helping children and teenagers. In the fall, we donated to Operation Footprint, an organization that performs surgery on children in Honduras suffering from club foot. For the spring, we wanted to choose a local charity to help those in our community."

Sophia Project Executive Director Carol Cole was thrilled by their approach. "Performers for Progress sought us out on their own," she said. "I am very impressed with their intention to help without asking anything for

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