

### For nearly two decades, North Valley Music School has nurtured the Flathead's growing musical climate

By [Tristan Scott](#) // May 24, 2016 // [Uncategorized](#)



Entering its 19th year and laying plans for another decade of growth, North Valley Music School in Whitefish is reaching its crescendo.

For years the school's reputation and enrollment have been building, stressing the confines of its small 1930s-era digs on Spokane Avenue, and sending scores of students into the Flathead Valley's burgeoning musical climate.

As Montana's only nonprofit, community music school, North Valley has found its niche, enjoying – and struggling to keep up with – steady enrollment increases in recent years.

Last year, the school served nearly 500 students, and it now boasts nine faculty members and two administrative staff, almost all with degrees in the subjects they teach, and all of them holding resumes cataloging impressive professional music experience. The school is also hiring a new executive director, and is preparing to host the Montana Music Event on June 17, which benefits the school.

North Valley Music School serves students of all ages through private lessons, early childhood music, performing ensembles, group classes, workshops, master classes and summer camps.

Its mission statement to enrich local communities through music education, appreciation and performance is on full display at regular studio recitals throughout the valley.

One of the faculty members is Christian Johnson, an original member of the Mission Mountain Wood Band and a familiar face in the Flathead Valley live music scene. Johnson is a member of numerous professional bands, but also makes time to teach students guitar, mandolin, fiddle, and electric bass.

In addition to his instructional chops, as a full-time musician Johnson can coach students whose ambitions include exploring music as a career.

Deidre Corson, president of the school's board of directors, said North Valley Music School is the "feeder program" to many of the Flathead's most successful cultural treasures, including Glacier Symphony and Chorale, the Whitefish Theatre Company and Alpine Theatre Project.

Despite the school's success, Corson said the goal is always to reach more students, including those in preschool programs as well as seniors who aspire to learn a musical instrument.

"We are always trying to grow and gain exposure to broaden our student base," she said. "After 20 years in a little old Victorian house with a sign out front, we want to be a known entity and a resource for all our aspiring musicians to come learn."

The school's 15-member board of directors is also seeking volunteers, and Deidre encouraged interested parties to contact the school at (406) 862-8074.

North Valley Music School is supported by the Montana Arts Council, a state agency funded by the State of Montana and the National Endowment for the arts, and actively seeks out matching challenges and endowments.

Corson said the Whitefish Community Foundation and the Great Fish Community Challenge have also been key resources to help cover operational costs.

"We are located in an amazing community and have an inspiring group of people who are behind our mission," Corson said. "We are excited for growth and to continue to reach out to new students."

## **The Montana Music Event**

**What: The Montana Music Event, featuring Mike Murray's "Bury Me In Montana," World class Montana photography and the North Valley Music School Glee Club.**

**When: June 17, 2016, 7-9 p.m.**

**Where: O'Shaughnessy Center, 1 Central Ave, Whitefish**

**For more information: (406) 862-8074**