

# KEY *Issue*



October 2019

## Stopping the Quitters: Celebrating the Finishers

**It is a fact: All students will discontinue lessons at some point.** Stopping lessons could be a very good thing and something to be celebrated. Other times, we may feel disappointed and question what we could have done differently. In any case, it is helpful to assess our own actions, which are the only variables we control.

**I think one of the major reasons a student quits lessons is because our goals as a teacher and the student's goals may not align.** We envision them practicing daily and working through a rigorous curriculum that culminates in exams, awards and a path to the conservatory. They may envision themselves sounding like Elton John after a few lessons or playing piano as easily as they play soccer. Our job would be to keep the student's goals in mind as we create challenges unique to their interests.

**Another reason students may discontinue lessons is because they don't have**

**the discipline to practice on their own.** A Suzuki trainer enumerated the teachers' responsibilities, and the parents' responsibilities, but the students? Theirs was only to be a child. We set families up for failure when we expect students to work independently, with their own initiative. We can correct this by clearly communicating to parents the need to consistently ensure that practice is done. The parent's role is to encourage but not to be a task master. Parents' should help especially during the early practice sessions after the lesson. If there are disagreements about the assignment, the teacher should be consulted.

**Students may also quit because of the solitary nature of practicing.** Most other extra curricular activities have an attractive social element. We can do much to encourage teamwork through ensemble playing, group lessons, in-studio communication of each other's activities and piano parties.

**Sometimes students quit because of us.** Are we too strict? Are we too disorganized? Do we take an interest in the student as an individual?

Does the student know that we genuinely like them and care about them? Are we happy to see them each week? Do they leave the studio with a bounce in their step? Check your attitude toward each student. Record some lessons to critique yourself. Better yet, ask a peer to observe a lesson and give constructive feedback.

**As students get older, they may quit because they see other students progressing more quickly than they have.** How we handle this has much influence on the student's perception of themselves as a musician. If they are not practicing as much as the other students have been, the rationale is straight-forward. However, if the student has been diligent, we need to tread carefully. Everyone has different strengths and that must be accepted. We can give the student a variety of repertoire at the mid-intermediate level that may keep them interested. Ultimately, a student must play because it brings them joy and a creative outlet. If it does not, celebrate their achievements to that point and ensure that they have the skills they need to work on their own, should they so desire

**When a student quits, I do everything in my power to make it an easy out for them.** Most people dread broaching this topic with the teacher. I believe childhood is a time to explore many activities without the pressure of negative consequences for stopping. I do not want clients to feel that lessons are a black hole from which they cannot easily be released. Students who pursue other interests are welcomed to come

back, should they so choose later, and I have had several who have done that and were very successful the second time.

**I always tell parents and students that my job is to serve them in the best way I possibly can for as long as it has value to them.** When their priorities or circumstances change, I happily release them with a celebratory sense of pride in what they have accomplished to this point. "For some, this is graduation from high school. For most, it is much earlier, but I count it a privilege to have been a part of the child's development for whatever time it was."



**Marilyn Henry**  
Membership Chair

# SPPTA CONCERTO COMPETITION

TIME TO ACT. Now through Tuesday, October 15th registration is open (online and via mail) for this year's SPPTA Concerto Competition. It is going to be on Saturday, December 7th at the Brooklyn Center Schmitt Music auditorium. Both the preliminary and final rounds will occur on that day, with winners announced at the close of the evening event.

This program remains a wonder year after year, as talented students through grade 12 come and perform their concerto movement with accompaniment. Each participant receives two highly-valued critiques, and competes for both cash prizes and the soloist performance spot with Mississippi Valley Orchestra at their February 3rd, 2020 concert. As SPPTA membership is not required, please share this amazing opportunity with other teachers. Expanding the awareness of and participation in this program will strengthen it, which will, in turn, benefit even more students. More information, along with registration details are in the SPPTA handbook and online at [www.sppta.org/concerto-competition](http://www.sppta.org/concerto-competition).



**Beverly Olson**

SPPTA Concerto Competition Chair

**If you have any questions please feel free to contact  
Beverly Olson**



## MUSIC PLAYATHON February 8-9, 2020

The MusicLink Foundation was created to help low income children get the opportunity to have music lessons. Qualified teachers are asked to reduce their normal lesson fee by at least 50% to make the lessons more affordable for the family.

Although the Foundation does not have the level of funding to reimburse the tuition donation, it can support the teacher and student in many other ways. These could include free & discounted music and teaching materials, assistance with practice instruments, summer music camp scholarships and teacher reimbursement for non-tuition expenses.

Do you have a family struggling to pay monthly tuition? Are you in danger of losing a student because of financial need? Do you just want to reach out to a student to give them a chance they might never otherwise have? Please consider becoming a MusicLink teacher. We can help!

**MARK YOUR CALENDARS**—The annual MusicLink Playathon at the Mall of America will be on the weekend of February 8-9, 2020. Let this be the year your students perform at this exciting venue!

**Visit: [www.musiclinkfoundation.com](http://www.musiclinkfoundation.com) to register or contact state coordinator, Sue Wege for more information.**

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**Sue Wege**  
State MusicLink Chair

# SPPTA FINANCIAL REPORT

## Account Balances - As of 9/13/2019 (Includes unrealized gains)

Account	9/13/2019 Balance
<b>Bank Accounts</b>	
Checking	11,288.76
Savings	940.95
<b>TOTAL Bank Accounts</b>	<b>12,229.71</b>
<b>Investment Accounts</b>	
CD #2821	5,089.06
CD #4441	6,465.09
<b>TOTAL Investment Accounts</b>	<b>11,554.15</b>
<b>OVERALL TOTAL</b>	<b>23,783.86</b>



**Sue Wege**  
SPPTA Treasurer Chair