

Entertainment

Downers Grove Reporter

**Screen Scene
What's Play**

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And the winners are ...

DGN, DGS named Grammy Signature Schools

by **Melissa A. Erickson**
STAFF WRITER

What do the musicians at Downers Grove North and South high schools have in common with the Smashing Pumpkins and R. Kelly? They've all won Grammy Awards.

Both North and South highs were recently selected as Grammy Signature Schools, heaping additional honors on the already highly-regarded District 99 music program.

Issued for the first time in 1998, the award was given by the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences, the same group that bestows the Grammys. Only 250 schools in the nation were chosen as Grammy Signature Schools.

In the music industry, a Grammy brings fame, honor and recognition to critically acclaimed and commercially successful artists or high school music programs.

arts department. When the students heard they won, "their enthusiasm and energy energized the staff."

Diane Hires, chairman of the DGS fine arts department, said "We have a well-developed and established program. I was pleased. It's like doing well on a test."

The award was announced publicly at the Holiday Concerts at both schools in December and the audiences responded with standing ovations.

While both schools won, the Grammy was not presented as a joint award, said Teague. North and South applied separately during the busy beginning of the school year. When Teague called over to his counterpart at South High, he said was happy and relieved to hear that DGS won too.

The next phase of the contest will narrow the winner down to one school. The winner will receive a Grammy Award and a plaque.

— FYI —

THE PERCENTAGE OF THE STUDENT BODY ENROLLED IN MUSIC CLASSES AT DOWNERS SOUTH IS BETWEEN 30 AND 40 PERCENT, AT DOWNERS NORTH 25 PERCENT.



Mimi Wolfe (cello), Dominique Royen (cello) and Valerie Prokop (viola) practicing with the Downers Grove South Orchestra Monday, Jan. 11.

PHOTO BY MELISSA A. ERICKSON

mance and non-performance courses.

"While some schools have a strong band, they may not offer orchestra. Or they may have strong performance courses, but not offer non-performance courses," Hires explained.

"But the District 99 music program is an all-around winner. In addition to band and orchestra, there are vocal and instrumental

excellent ratings in competitions and festivals year in and year out. But both Hires and Teague agreed that their most prestigious honor was the Outstanding Total Music Program Award from the Illinois Music Educators Association during the 1992-'93 school year.

The award has only been given out three times in the past 10 years, with the recipient being New Trier High School, Schaumburg High

win the IMEA Award and be designated a Grammy Signature School without the work of individuals such as Clarence Shoemaker, the district's first band director; John Svoboda, District 99 orchestra director; choral directors William Pohlman and Barbara Barnes; and more recently, Pat Anello, orchestra, Richard Hart, choral, Alan Roselich, band, and Ca

in the music industry, a Grammy brings fame, honor and recognition to critically acclaimed and commercially successful artists. For high school music programs, it's really just another feather in the cap.

"It's a nice recognition for the students," said Brayer Teague, chairman of the North High fine

arts. Over to his counterpart at South High, he said was happy and relieved to hear that DGS won, too. The next phase of the contest is still in the top 16 in the nation, but both North and South have chosen to drop out of the running. After finding out that there's a "zero chance" of two schools from the same town making the top 16, "we decided not to participate," Teague said.

The criteria for winning included depth of course offerings, percentage of students enrolled in music, commitment to the music program by school and level of involvement by the community.

The Downers Grove schools may have been singled out for their curriculum. Both offer a variety of perfor-

es," Hires explained. But the District 99 music program is an all-around winner. In addition to bar bands, jazz bands, and such as jazz ensembles, wind quartets, brass quintets, various trios, a steel drum band at Downers South and a concert percussion ensemble at Downers North.

The choral classes perform a wide range of music, from renaissance, baroque, classical and romantic to contemporary, pop, jazz and gospel. Other groups include chamber singers, treble ensembles and madrigal singers.

In the non-performance category, students may attend classes in music theory, guitar lessons, rock and jazz appreciation and a composing with computer class called MIDI Music (Musical Instrument Digital Interface).

For a college-bound student with a full class load it may be difficult to fit in some of these elective courses, so the schools try to simplify matters by offering some classes, such as music theory, before the regular school day begins. Co-curricular groups meet after school.

Highly awarded, the District 99 music groups earn superior and

ing the 1992-93 school year. The award has only been given out twice in the past 10 years, with the other recipient being New Trier High School. Grammy, the NMEA award recognized the overall music program, but was presented to the District as a whole.

To win awards such as these, a music program must evolve over many years, Hires said. North and South have both benefited from faculty members who spent their careers at the schools developing this rich tradition of excellence.

Both Hires and Teague said it would not have been possible to

Pohlman and Barbara Barnes; and more recently, Pat Anello, orchestra, Richard Hart, chorus, Alan Rosell, band, and Carol Sustie, orchestra.

The music programs enjoy a broad base of support that includes active parent groups such as band boosters and the newer Friends of Fine Arts.

"Our support is absolutely phenomenal, not just from the school but from the community as well," Teague said. "There's a commitment to music." Hires agreed that "Downers Grove has always valued music."



Bassoonists Kristen Zufan and Neva Hankins play with the Downers Grove South Concert Band.

PHOTO BY MELISSA A. ERICKSON



Frank Piekarz directs the Downers Grove North Chamber Choir (above and left).

PHOTOS BY RON KOOPMANN