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DONATE NOW!

Times are tough for everyone, but our kids still need the same level of support. Our expenses have not diminished. If anything, they've gone up.

The Ellington Fund will always rely on individuals like you to invest in our kids and their dreams. To invest in their college-preparatory education. To invest in the support services and staff that are critical to keeping them in school. Our dual curriculum doubles the costs of running the school, yet we don't get double the funds from DC Public Schools.

Please consider donating now by going to www.ellingtonschool.org. It's easy! You can choose to make a one-time gift or sign up for a recurring gift so you can pay in installments that make giving more affordable over time. A donation to the

Welcome to the March edition of the Ellington Fund's eNewsletter!

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**Visual Arts Faculty Exhibit
(Exhibit closes April 1)**

March 31

[Vocal Honors Recital](#)

April 2

[Vocal Senior Showcase, Short-Term Memory](#)

April 3

[Visual Arts Exhibit, Student Show, Opening Reception](#)

April 7, 9, 14, 17, 20

[Senior Recitals](#)

April 29

[New Washingtonians Jazz Orchestra,
Duke Ellington's Birthday Concert](#)

For a more detailed and up-to-date calendar of events, please visit
www.ellingtonschool.org
or call the Box Office at **202.337.4825**

Ellington Fund is an investment in the future of our city's youth. Thank you for your support!

DENYCE GRAVES BENEFIT A GRAND SUCCESS!

The excitement and glamour were palpable last week as opera buffs and Ellington patrons alike filed into the hallowed halls of DC's John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. Just steps away from the royal red carpets and stately chandeliers was the stage that would feature Ellington's most esteemed alumna, opera icon Denyce Graves, who performed to benefit the school.



The evening's program was unique; while the first half of the evening featured opera, the second half showcased pieces outside her usual repertoire, from American classics to spirituals to pop. Ms. Graves was accompanied by celebrity pianist Joseph Thalken and the school's esteemed show choir, whose performance won audience praise.

"Denyce Graves has a voice for the ages, a personality that could melt a polar icecap, and a smile like a sunrise," gushed DESAP board member Michael Freedman after the show. "Combined with the Ellington School Show Choir, the accompanying musicians, and the efforts of all their mentor/teachers, this was one of the most memorable evenings of any kind I can recall."

Following the performance VIP guests attended a festive reception at 600 Watergate, where party-goers toasted a wonderful evening and Ms. Graves greeted fans and smiled graciously for an enthusiastic corps of reporters and photographers.

"We are so grateful for the generous support of our donors; the ceaseless efforts of our consultants; the talents of students, faculty, and staff; and of course, the unwavering loyalty of alumni like Denyce Graves, who made the evening possible," says Ellen Copley, executive director of the Ellington Fund. "Thanks to them, the evening was a grand success. We raised over \$300,000, which was extraordinary given such threatening economic times. It is much needed and will make a tremendous difference in the lives of our students this year."

Special thanks go to Betty Brown Casey, Kenneth Feld, and Dave Chappelle, who headed

the list of our major sponsors, and to the many arts patrons, board members and corporations who generously supported the event, as well.

Photo: Denyce Graves mingles with Bitsy Folger at the post-concert reception.

ANNIE P. WHATLEY: WHY IT'S IMPORTANT TO GIVE BACK



Though Annie P. Whatley has worked at the Department of Energy for over 30 years, one could say she's led a parallel career in community service. One of the Ellington Fund's newest board members is certainly not new to the world of volunteerism.

Annie has chaired fund-raising activities for the capital chapter of LINKS, Inc., and also is involved with many programs for youth and senior citizens and Delta Sigma Theta service sorority.

Education has always been the cause closest to her heart. For years, Annie was a parent volunteer at Georgetown Day School, where her daughter attended, and she served on the school's Board of Trustees. Annie currently serves on the Board of the Greater Washington Urban League, receiving the 2005 Outstanding Service Award.

Ellen Copley, the Ellington Fund's executive director, was impressed by Annie's great passion and commitment and knew she'd be a tremendous asset to the Ellington School. Annie joined the Ellington Fund's board this past fall, and her first big project was on the benefit committee for the Denyce Graves benefit in February.

Annie got to work writing to connections whom she knew were committed to the arts and education, and as a result, single-handedly raised (over \$15,000) in event sponsorships. She considers the event a great success: "I was so impressed with Denyce Graves, of course," she reflects, "but the students...they're what keep you going. They're so talented, and they gave an outstanding performance. They make all the hard work worthwhile."

Even in tough times, Annie feels it's important to keep on giving-even when it takes a little creativity. "If you can't raise \$15,000, raise \$2,000," she says. Or give of your time, she suggests. Ellington has rigorous academic standards, and students must maintain their grade point averages to attend. Annie suggests serving students as tutors or mentors.

But whatever you do, never stop giving. "Everyone has a responsibility to give back. If we don't, so many young folk like those at Ellington won't be able to reach their dreams the way we have. As artists, they'll make life better for all of us-can you imagine a world without the arts? We've come full circle, and it's so important to give back."

To learn how you can make a difference, please email info@ellingtonarts.org.

ELLINGTON SPRING SHOWS: PLAN A BIG NIGHT (OR AFTERNOON) OUT!

It seems, these days, that every feature magazine article and news story is about living life on the cheap. In these belt-tightening times, remember Ellington as you plan your social and cultural calendar. We offer a variety of impressive performances and exhibits for little to no money. Attending will be easy on your wallet, provide an enjoyable cultural experience, and support the community and DC's talented youth.

STUDENT ART EXHIBIT, OPENING RECEPTION

April 3, 5:00 p.m.

Our visual arts students are teeming with talent, and each spring offers the opportunity to showcase a broad variety of their two- and three-dimensional work. "Visual Arts teachers work together to put together what we determine to be a culmination of the students' most exceptional work from throughout the year," says Bill Harris, visual arts instructor. "I think our guests will be extremely impressed." Please join us for an opportunity to meet our young visual artists, an evening of cultured conversation, and light refreshments in Ellington's beautifully remodeled gallery space. It promises to be a lovely evening! (This event is free to the public.)

NEW WASHINGTONIANS JAZZ ORCHESTRA: DUKE ELLINGTON'S BIRTHDAY CONCERT

April 29, 7:30 p.m.

Ellington's Birthday Concert is one of the school's annual highlights. If you enjoy the rousing jazzy sounds of big band, small jazz ensembles, and a few soloists to boot, you'll enjoy a broad variety of the hits of yesteryear. This year's program includes pieces by Duke Ellington himself, plus standards by Charlie Parker, Benny Golson, Jerome Kern, and Benny Carter. A finger-popping, toe-tapping good time! All proceeds will help raise funds for our jazz students to perform at the Bahamian Jazz Festival.

[Click here](#) to purchase tickets.

OPERA WORKSHOP: A MEMORABLE NIGHT AT THE OPERA

May 21-22, 7:30 p.m.

Inarguably one of the year's most brilliant performances, Opera Workshop students showcase the work of major operas with heart-wrenching beauty and skill. This year's production features particularly broad talent performing short scenes from Bizet's Carmen, Flotow's Martha, and Mozart's Cosi fan tutte and The Marriage of Figaro. Some of the

Carmen costumes were designed and built by Ellington's costume design class in cooperation with the Washington National Opera. The costumes and student designers were featured at a special performance at the Kennedy Center last November.

ELLINGTON INSTRUMENTAL STUDENTS SHINE!



Two Instrumental Music students have had unique and successful experiences this spring. We are so proud of...

Clifton Williams, a junior and gifted pianist. Clifton was selected to perform with *From the Top*, an independent non-profit organization that celebrates the passion, dedication, and personal stories of the nation's outstanding young classical musicians. Through entertaining radio and television broadcasts, online media, and a national tour of live events and outreach programs, these performers inspire the pursuit of excellence and encourage participation in the arts

as an integral part of a vibrant and civil society. Clifton will travel to Boston for the taping later this month.

Through *From the Top*, Clifton won a Jack Kent Cook scholarship, which allows him \$10,000 to spend on musical supplies for up to one year. "I'm investigating summer programs," says Clifton. "I might get a new piano or keyboard and stock up on my music."

Be sure to tune in to Clifton's show at the end of April--we'll announce the date when we know it!

It's not every day that a high school student performs with famed trumpeter Wynton Marsalis, but Ellington's talented saxophonist, Elijah Easton, made an onstage appearance at an assembly at Hardy Middle School. In an effort to illustrate a point about musical individuality, Mr. Marsalis asked if anyone in the audience had brought his horn. "I looked around, and people had their instruments, but no one was raising their hands," says Elijah. "I thought, 'I'm going up there!'" He hadn't known the opportunity would present itself, but Elijah always comes prepared. "Never leave without your horn," he imparts.

The band members' support and encouragement emanated towards Elijah as he played a lengthy solo. "It's easier to play for musicians than it is to just a general audience," the young musician explains. "They've been where I am; they understand. So there's no being nervous--just excited. You have to have heart to make it in this business, and can't let nerves get in the way."

Mr. Marsalis was so impressed that he asked Elijah to stay onstage and play with the band for the remainder of the performance. "That felt great," says Elijah, who will attend Hartt School of Music in Hartford, Connecticut next fall. "It's what I want to do for the rest of my life." Afterwards, the band's lead tenor saxophonist, Walter Blanding, stuck around to give Elijah some tips and pointers, and the two exchanged phone numbers. Mr. Marsalis, too, gave Elijah a couple of quick lessons, and said he wants to see him again. "He said I'm gonna be bad," beams Elijah, "and by bad, he means good."



"You don't get too many chances to change your life forever--so this was really special," he continues. "These were artists looking for the opportunity to give back to young people so the music can continue."

To support an Ellington department close to your heart, contact info@ellingtonarts.org.

Photos: Top, Clifton Williams
Bottom, Elijah Easton

MUSEUM STUDIES INTERNS: AROUND TOWN

Ellington's Museum Studies program is unique in and of itself, and one of its many distinctive features is the fact that all Museum Studies seniors are required to participate in an internship program with one of DC's many prestigious museums. Twice a week from January til May, Museum Studies student interns disperse to work side-by-side with museum professionals.

This spring, we're proud of our Museum Studies seniors:

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AMERICAN HISTORY'S GRAPHICS DEPT.

Ranneisha Champion
Geneva Tann

**SUMNER SCHOOL MUSEUM'S
REGISTRATION & EXHIBITION DEPT.**

Alexander Brown
Britney Garrett
Christopher Nguyen

**TUDOR PLACE HISTORIC HOUSE'S
MUSEUM EDUCATION DEPT.**

Sharifa Austin
Alexis Obodo

**SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION'S
TRAVELING EXHIBITION SERVICES SITES, PUBLIC AFFAIRS**

Taylor Miese

ELLINGTON'S IN-HOUSE INTERNSHIP, CATALOGUING

Lauren Alvarez
Katie Taylor



"It's so important that Museum Studies students gain experience working alongside industry professionals," says department chair Marta Reid Stewart. "Through these internships, students get to perform tasks related to the major functions of the museum world-collection, registration, conservation, education, and exhibition-and that is simply invaluable."

To support the Museum Studies department, please email info@ellingtonarts.org.

Photo: Geneva Tann works with the large-scale printer in the graphics department of the Museum of American History.

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