

FAIRVIEW PARK

New ukuleles for Gilles-Sweet

By **BRIAN GEORGE**

About two dozen audience members heard more than school business at last week's school board meeting. They were treated to a video of a rousing rendition of "On Top of Spaghetti" by Gilles-Sweet Elementary fourth-grade students — a musical interlude that wouldn't have been possible without some innovative teachers ... and ukuleles.

The school recently purchased 30 ukuleles with a \$1,700 grant to help broaden the music literacy of the fourth-grade students at Gilles-Sweet and introduce new ways to experience music. It has provided students a chance to learn to play string instruments.

"We had been giving the fourth-grade students the opportunity to sing and use a simplified wind instrument, the recorder, so that they could make a choice when the time came," Music teacher at Gilles-Sweet Peter Cibulskas, 53, said. "Hillery Needham, our orchestra teacher, thought we should add ukuleles to the curriculum so that students can get experience using the fine motor skills that are used with the orchestra. The ukuleles are small enough for our students to handle and easy to work on basic music skills."

The ukuleles were purchased through a grant from the Cuyahoga County ADAMHS Board.

"At the end of last school year, the music department at the elementary school got together to brainstorm," said Gilles-Sweet Principal Matt Krivak. "We wanted to help our fourth-grade class gain exposure to different types of instruments in preparation for fifth grade by working on string instruments and foster finger dexterity. We are extremely grateful to our music department."

When the students reach the fifth grade, they have the option of joining band, choir, or orchestra. The music department hopes that utilizing the string instruments, such as the ukulele, will help students gain skills that will prepare them for this choice and be able to go



Photo courtesy of Fairview Park Schools

Peter Cibulskas

to middle school with a unique background in music literacy.

"Music is in our lives every day," Cibulskas said. A day doesn't go by when you don't hear some kind of music, a jingle, a theme song, or the radio. It is all around us. By participating in music, students can create their own sounds and help to express their own feelings. Kids connect to songs that they hear. If they can perform that music, it lets them express what they are feeling. This is an important part of growing up and understanding themselves."

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