

Newsletter of the Center City Residents' Association

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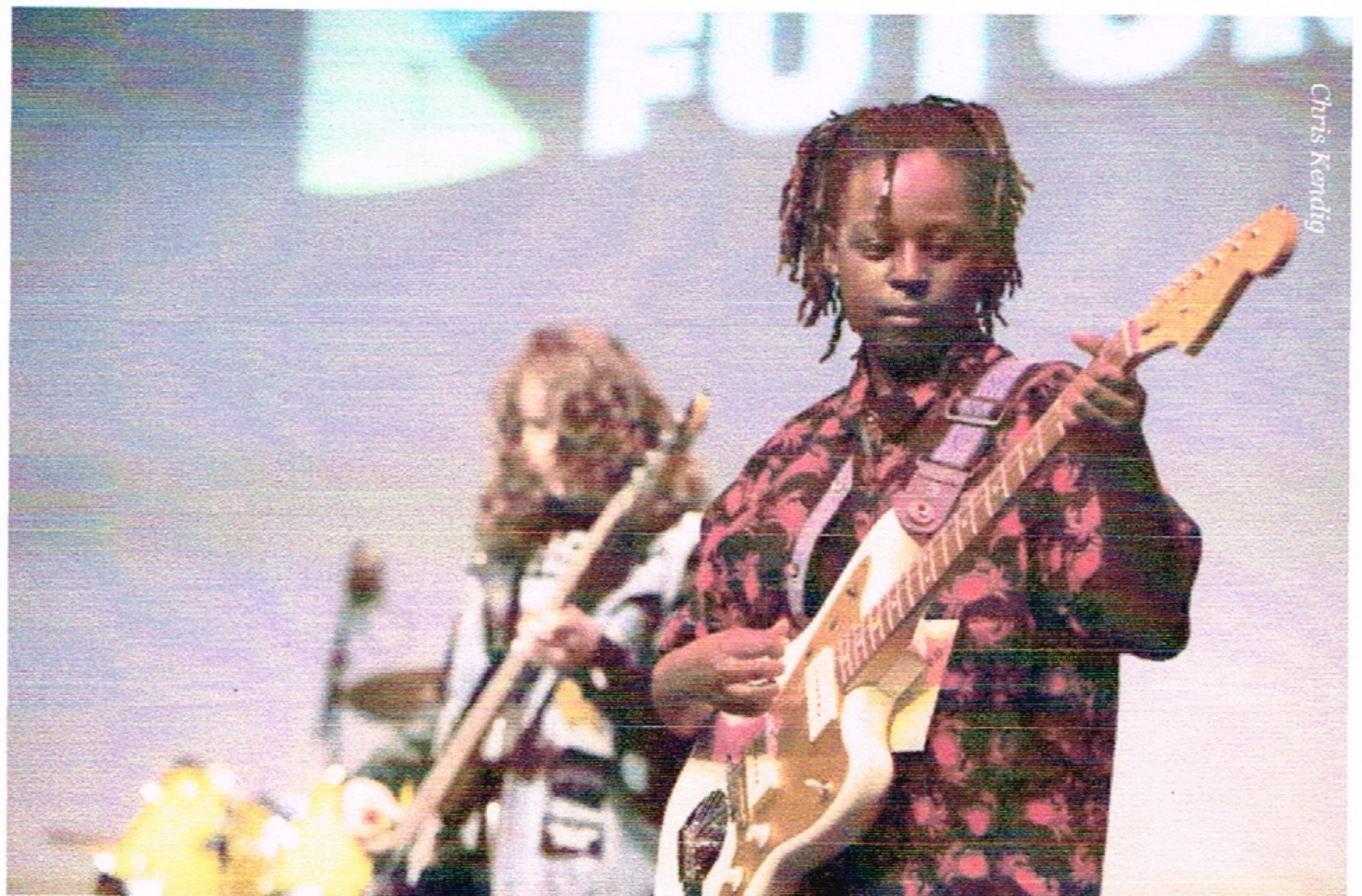
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## It's Academic

# Students Creating Music, Countering Violence

By Bonnie Eisenfeld



Rock to the Future's Music for All Ball at the Mandell Theater, April 2019.

In September the District Attorney's office gave a grant of \$50,000 to *Rock to the Future* <https://rocktothefuture.org/>, a nonprofit community organization, offering music programs to children and teens in grades 3 to 12. This grant was one of several the city gave this year to community organizations in the effort to reduce gun violence.

Founded and operated by Jessica Craft, Rock to the Future's program options include in-school, after-school, summer, and virtual classes and workshops, at no cost to the students. Located at safe locations in under-resourced areas, the organization provides instruments and supplies to all participants, including beginners, and some of its programs offer academic support, meals, and transportation.

"When I found out Rock to the Future was here," one student says, "I was really happy. It was honestly like my life has been saved..."

Craft is convinced that her organization helps children and teens avoid situations involving gun violence. "There is a lot of interest in our programs," she says. "Our students create original music around themes like bullying and gun violence. They collaborate, build positive relationships with peers, and learn communication and conflict-resolution skills."

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During the 2020/2021 school year, Rock to the Future served 523 students virtually, and delivered more than 200 instruments to students' homes. This school year, the organization has returned to in-person programs while also continuing virtual programs.

Since its founding in 2010, Rock to the Future has benefited thousands of young people. In past years, students in the program have performed at the Kimmel Center and other locations in the city. You can find some of their music on YouTube.

The D.A.'s grant represents about eight percent of Rock to the Future's budget. Corporations, small businesses, community partners, and foundations also provide support. Increased grants and donations will allow the organization to accept more students, to expand its locations, and to offer paid internships to high school students.

Craft's first grant in 2010 was for \$15,000, from Women for Social Innovation, formerly a Center City giving circle consisting of about 20 women. The group's mission was to help emerging social entrepreneurs start innovative programs to improve the lives of children, women, and families in the Philadelphia area.

## Town Square

# Granny Peace Brigade Promotes Peace Globally and Locally

By Bonnie Eisenfeld

Granny Peace Brigade Philadelphia, led by Gerry Schneeberg, Jean Haskell, Joan Kosloff, and Helen Evelev, celebrated Peace Day Philly and the International Day of Peace, Tuesday, September 21, by distributing questionnaires to passersby at Rittenhouse Square.

One hundred people answered two questions: What is something you would do to bring peace to the world? What is something you would do to end the gun violence and bring peace to our city?

The most frequent responses to the question about peace in the world were to meditate, pray, be kind to others, and have empathy for others. "Perhaps these comments," Haskell says, "reflect the ways in which people deal with stress about war, rather than actions to end war." One person suggested people-to-people conversations across the lines that divide them.

Making guns and firearms illegal and banning the sale of ammunition were the most frequent responses to the question about bringing peace to the city. Other responses included better schools, an end to poverty, and conversations with young people and community leaders in high-risk neighborhoods to help create solutions.

Some responses that spanned both the city and the world included: welcome refugees, stop the military complex, and respect other people and countries.

[Granny Peace Brigade Philadelphia](#), whose mission is to make a safe and peaceful world for all children and grandchildren, recently celebrated its 15th birthday. What keeps Haskell from

getting discouraged? She says she has persisted in peace activities with the group all those years because "I get very angry, sometimes outraged, at all the stupid, inhumane, cruel things that people make happen in the world—especially war, gun violence, climate change, poor-quality education, and poverty—and I don't like to sit and fume, so I decide I have to do something—and that is motivating."

She added that Grannies are "strong, supportive women who motivate each other, like each other, and have fun working together at meetings and marches. Sometimes even a lot of laughs—and that's priceless!"

Facebook: [GrannyPeaceBrigadePhiladelphia](#)



The Granny Peace Brigade celebrated Peace Day Philly and the International Day of Peace at Rittenhouse Square, along with the Philadelphia Ethical Society.