



Keep Music Alive

KeepMusicAlive.org
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GUIDE to Hosting a Musical Instrument Petting Zoo

Our Musical Instrument Petting Zoo History

Keep Music Alive began hosting musical instrument petting zoo events in late 2018, and by the end of 2019 we had hosted approximately 12 events. The pandemic sidelined our activities for the next 18 months and we were finally able to host a half dozen outdoor events in the Fall of 2021. We ramped up our schedule in 2022, finishing the year with a total of 40 events. During that year, we began reaching out to more venues and partnering with other non-profits. We expanded further in 2023 with a total of 60 musical instrument petting zoo events, hosting as many as 10 events in one month. However, please don't let that scare you – even if you host just 1 or 2 events per month once you get started, you'll be making a huge impact each year.

WHY You Should Start an Instrument Petting Zoo Program

Besides the altruistic reason of knowing how important it is for children to play music, hosting a musical instrument petting zoo at libraries and community festivals is good for business. The number one question we get asked by parents at public events is “*do you offer lessons?*” and our answer is always no. However, we point them to our music school partners in their community. If your organization is hosting a musical instrument petting zoo, your answer to that question will be a resounding YES. You can hand out flyers and/or business cards to everyone coming through your interactive booth of musical instruments. You will also generate new business just by promoting your musical instrument petting zoo events. PLUS, beginning in 2024, families across the U.S. will be able to enter their zip code (or city & state) on the KeepMusicAlive.org website to see public Musical Instrument Petting Zoo events happening in their area. You'll be able to submit your events to our Musical Instrument Petting Zoo calendar each month. We will also be providing tips on promoting your event to families, local community groups and the media.

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Where we host events: Keep Music Alive brings our musical instrument petting zoos to elementary schools, libraries, small and large community festivals, daycare & senior centers...we also partner with other non-profits to bring the program to the families they serve. Beginning in 2024, we will begin hosting the program at pre-schools and daycares, thanks to a grant received to support that audience. Keep Music Alive also offers the Musical Instrument Petting Zoo for children's birthday parties and corporate events.

What we currently bring: Keep Music Alive brings over 50 different musical instruments including acoustic & electric guitars (adult & child size), ukuleles, keyboards and dozens of different types of percussion instruments. Some of the more interesting percussion instruments we bring include the frog guiro (frog tone block), thunder tube (spring drum), kalimba (thumb piano), ocean wave drum, steel pan drum, mini-accordion and the Otamatone (music note shaped electronic instrument that sounds like a theremin). NOTE: You can absolutely start your musical instrument petting zoo program with much less, which is what we did. We weren't doing many events when we started – we would bring about a half dozen instruments that we owned and borrowed another dozen instruments from another music organization. Some of the instruments we use now are available on our Keep Music Alive store page: <https://www.keepmusicalive.org/store>

How we promote events: We maintain a calendar of events on KeepMusicAlive.org and include information about upcoming events in our newsletters. For many of our events, we also create a Facebook event and share that on local Facebook community group pages that share news about the community where we will be. Events at schools and community festivals will generally provide a built-in audience. Beginning in early 2024, all of our public events (along with yours) will be included in the event finder on the Keep Music Alive Instrument Petting Zoo page.

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How we fund events: When we first started, everything we did was self-funded. As we became more established, we began applying for small grants from community funders that would support music & arts events. Many places, such as libraries, senior centers, preschools and school PTL/PTO/PTA school organizations will also provide a small stipend (\$100-\$150). NOTE: You do not have to be a non-profit to receive stipend for these events, however granting organizations typically only fund non-profit organizations.

What happens at a Musical Instrument Petting Zoo: When families begin to arrive at one of our public events, we invite them to come look, touch and play all the instruments. We literally begin with “*Welcome to our Musical Instrument Petting Zoo, where you can touch and play everything!*” This is, of course, an invitation children almost never hear...most often, they are told “don’t touch” whenever coming across something they are interested in. Our staff and volunteer teaching artists show children and adults how to hold the different instruments and how to make their very own musical sounds. If we’re at an elementary school or other venue where we are rotating in small groups of children (ideally no more than 15-20 at a time), we’ll do a one-minute introduction before having the children begin trying out the instruments. We remind them not to run, be gentle with the instruments, and most of all to share. We encourage them to ask questions and to let us know what their favorite instruments are. Depending on the size of the group and timing, we’ll sometimes do a percussion parades, where the attendees pick a favorite percussion instrument and we parade around the area, making music & having fun! We also have mini-signs placed on the table, so parents & children can see what the instrument looks like and what the name of the instrument is.

How many attend: How many attendees we have at an event can range from 12-15 kids & adults at a small library over a 90 minute period, to several hundred kids and adults at a large community festival over 4-6 hours. We always have at least 2 staff and one additional volunteer at events, though for the larger events, we try to make sure we have at least 4 staff/volunteers and preferably 6 total to give everyone a chance to walk away and take a break at some point.

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Miscellaneous: Since we bring a large number of instruments, we typically arrive at a venue about an hour prior to the event start time, to load in and set up. Elementary schools and libraries will usually have tables you can utilize (check in advance) and for outdoor public events, we bring our own tables. For outdoor events in the heat or possible wet weather, we also bring our own canopy.

Link to our Affiliate store for instruments: – Some of the instruments we use are available on our Keep Music Alive Amazon affiliate store page: <https://www.keepmusicalive.org/store> If you decide to purchase items from our store, Amazon will donate 5% of your purchase to our 501(C)(3) non-profit. To see photos and video clips from our musical instrument petting zoo events, please visit: www.keepmusicalive.org/instrument-petting-zoos

