**Friends of UVHS Performing Arts – a Parent’s Perspective**

At the last *Friends* meeting I was asked, by the very few other parents who attended, to write a few words to try to encourage other parents to support the *Friends* a little more, but as the Treasurer for the *Friends* charity I thought I would put a financial spin on it.

So, what’s the incentive for Parents to support the *Friends of UVHS*...?

Last year Mr Butler led a trip to Paris where the Swing Band represented OUR SCHOOL at Disneyland on Bastille Day.  This event was televised nationally throughout France.  As a thank-you for supporting the Bastille Day celebrations, Disneyland originally promised our kids a day-pass to enjoy the Park for the rest of the day, however later withdrew this offer - but only after Mr Butler had informed the children and their families of the free tickets.  So the dilemma then was, should we add an additional £40 per person to the price of the trip (an already significant £300 commitment for a 3-night stay supported by an additional £3500 from *The Friends*) or should we try to give a little back to the Swing Band, whose efforts raise a significant amount throughout the year both for the *Friends* and also for local community charities?  We decided, as a *Friends* Committee, to do the latter, to the tune of an additional £1,600.

The Wind Band tour of Italy in 2019 will provide the opportunity for almost 90 students to visit and perform at a number of events during an 8-day trip.  The uncertainty over Brexit has caused the tour operators to add an element of conservatism to their pricing, just in case the Pound falls drastically against the Euro.  The price of this trip per pupil is £600, however the actual cost is way in excess of £690 per person.  The difference once more is being made up from the coffers of the *Friends* charity account – some £8,100 in this case, not including the additional subsidies available to families.

The annual Royal Marines weekend provides our pupils with the priceless opportunity to play alongside professional musicians at a public event and also benefit first hand from hearing about their personal and professional experiences.  To allow Mr Butler to continue to arrange events such as this, the *Friends of UVHS* needs to underwrite the associated costs.  With the hire of the Coronation Hall plus accommodation and subsistence for the Marines costing in the region of £7,000, we need to sell-out the venue to just break even.  The only funds raised for the *Friends* over this weekend come from the raffle at the main event.

As a parent I did not realise the enormous sums of money or appreciate the tremendous behind-the-scenes efforts that have enabled my daughter to enjoy her music fully at UVHS over the last few years (this does not include all the additional work done to provide funding for Drama and Dance).  The Italy tour next year is costing close to a staggering £70,000; can you imagine the pressure on Mr Butler to ensure the success of this trip???

As a balanced response, here’s a few typical comments:

**“But my child isn’t in the Wind or Swing Band”**…  The *Friends of UVHS* also supports the purchase of instruments for use by ALL pupils and fully supports the musical development of pupils pre-Year 7.

**“My child isn’t even musical”**… As Head of Performing Arts, Mr Butler also has responsibility for Dance and Drama.  The *Friends of UVHS* also supports some of the costs associated with other Performing Arts productions, such as the purchase of sets, hire of sound/lighting, purchase of mirrors (dance) ,hire of school production material.

**“The school has a Music Department – they should organise these sort of things”**…  Mr Butler was awarded an MBE this year for ‘Services to Music Education’ (he will absolutely hate me for putting this!). Now, if the Queen thinks Mr Butler is going above and beyond the call of duty to ensure our children receive the best education possible, then I think we should be doing our best to help too! None of the activities mentioned in this letter are on his (or any other staff) job description or contract.

And finally, let’s address the elephant in the room - **“I don’t have as much spare money as I would like to support the school”**… The *Friends of UVHS* recognise this, hence the efforts made to raise funds to enable the fantastic international trips to be subsidised and allow as many of our children as possible the opportunity to experience performing at public events throughout Europe.

And this is where I am now asking for your support.  It’s not your money we are after, although philanthropic gestures are always gratefully received!  I am asking for a little of the most valuable of commodities – your time.  Please support the *Friends of UVHS* – considering the fact that well over 10% of the school’s students attend weekly rehearsals in one or more of the Performing Arts, only 8 parents have attended recent meetings. At our next meeting we will be discussing the Wind Band tour, the Royal Marines weekend, the School Production, Dance/Drama development and, most importantly, our latest ideas to continue raising funds to support OUR children’s education!

**AC – Parent (and Treasurer, *Friends of UVHS Performing Arts*)**