

Headline: They came; they learned; they rocked
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The [rock\[0\]](#) 'n' roll sounds of the [Rock\[0\]](#) Academy of DuPage were released from the basement of the Loyal Order of Moose Lodge in Downers Grove and set loose down the street at Ballydoyle Irish Pub & Restaurant on Oct. 28.

More than 100 parents, friends and supporters of the young rockers came to the academy's final performance to hear the teens play everything from Black Sabbath to the White Stripes.

"I was so proud," said Holly Pintozzi, co-founder and academy instructor. "I thought they sounded better than they ever have."

The two classes, one for middle [school\[0\]](#) students and one for high [schoolers\[0\]](#), met once a week for eight weeks to learn what it takes to be in a band.

The students worked on putting together songs for the final performance with help from professional musicians and also got the chance to interact with other young musicians interested in putting a band together.

Apparently, teenagers who play together stay together. The older group of about half a dozen students started working together in the first session over the summer and signed up for the second session as well. They even have a name for their group: the Fuzzy Bunnies.

But don't be fooled by the cuddly name; the group's final concert featured covers of songs by decidedly non-cuddly Rage Against the Machine and System of a Down.

After the first session of classes ended, the students had played to a smaller audience in the basement of the Moose Lodge, so the switch to the Ballydoyle stage was fun for everyone.

"I thought everybody played their parts really well," said Brian Grippando, 12. "I was nervous at first, but after we played the first few notes, it was fine."

Over the course of the class, founders Pintozzi and Vicki Jenke taught students about musical collaboration, confidence and self-esteem. Pintozzi also gave the students some pointers for the final performance.

"We do a lot of troubleshooting," she said. "I tell them it's OK to make mistakes - it's not letting on that they make mistakes."

The students admitted that they missed a few notes during the performance, but no one seemed to notice.

The next [rock\[0\]](#) academy session begins Nov. 11, and the [school\[0\]](#) is taking applications. All students are expected to have at least a year of experience on drums, bass or guitar before signing up so the focus can stay on the creation of a band.



PhotoBy: Photos by Herb Shenkin / Special to The Sun

Caption: Erik Jensen sings lead vocals during his group's performance Oct. 28 at Ballydoyle in Downers Grove with Andrew Masciopinto, center, on bass guitar and Raymond Fields on lead guitar. The boys had just completed an eight-week session at the Rock Academy of DuPage in Downers Grove. Relatives and other fans take in a concert by young graduates of the Rock Academy of DuPage at Ballydoyle Irish Pub & Restaurant.

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Headline: No quiet in this class
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Trying to teach a class full of adolescent boys with musical instruments in their hands is not the easiest of tasks.

While Holly Pintozzi attempted to teach six 11- and 12-year-olds where to listen for the rhythm in a song, the boys absentmindedly strummed their guitars or tapped their drums as if to say, "I wanna [rock\[0\]!](#)"

At the [Rock\[0\]](#) Academy of DuPage, teachers work with students to create the type of structure needed for a band - the type of structure that's often hard for adolescents to create themselves.

"Kids try to put together a band, but they just never do it," said Vicki Janke of Downers Grove, the businesswoman behind the [rock\[0\] school\[0\]](#).

Her teenage sons both play drums, but she noticed that whenever the kids tried to put together a band, someone would cancel or they would disagree, eventually lose interest and end up kicking around a soccer ball in the backyard.

This class, which meets weekly in the basement of the Downers Grove Loyal Order of Moose building, gives teens a structured time and place to meet every week, with the added bonus of having music teachers on hand to help.

Pintozzi, a drum teacher and instructor for the group from Downers Grove, helps the teens choose a band name, pick the songs and put the group together.

She used to teach Janke's son and would bring in professional musicians to play with the drummers.

Janke mentioned to Pintozzi that a place to bring kids together to learn about creating a band would be a great idea. Pintozzi said she had the same idea but wasn't sure how to bring it all together. The [Rock\[0\]](#) Academy, which premiered in late August, is the product of their ideas.

All students are expected to have at least a year on either the drums, bass or guitar before signing up for the class so the focus can stay on the creation of a band. The teachers are available for private lessons to help individual students on their song parts, but at group practice times the students are expected to know the songs.

During practice, the students - who range in ages from 11 to 17 - work on putting together the songs they rehearse, with lyrics, instruments and rhythm all on cue. During the middle-[schoolers\[0\]](#) session on Sept. 16, the band rehearsed

songs such as "I Love [Rock](#) 'n' Roll" by Joan Jett and the Blackhearts and "Seven Nation Army" by the White Stripes.

Janke said the goal is for the students to learn four songs that they can perform at the end of the class, when they host a concert at Ballydoyle Irish Pub & Restaurant in Downers Grove.

Jeremy Craven, an 11-year-old in the class, said he joined because it's fun and said playing at Ballydoyle will be a great opportunity.

Just like any other [school](#), this academy comes with homework. Outside of class, the students are expected to practice and polish their songs.

Most of the students in this session are from Downers Grove, but the academy is accepting students from anywhere.



PhotoBy: Herb Shenkin / Special to The Sun

Caption: Zach Smith pounds out the beat during rehearsal time at the Rock Academy of DuPage. The class meets weekly in the basement of the Downers Grove Loyal Order of Moose building