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**Kids unleash their inner rockstar at music school**

Elizabeth Vassolo / Triblocal.com staff reporter 08/03/09 10:40 AM 317 hits

Most mothers will do anything for their children. When Downers Grove resident Vicki Jenke's teenage sons wanted to study rock music and play with other musicians, Jenke couldn't find a music school to give her kids the experience that was best for them. So she took matters into her own hands and created Rock Academy.

"My kids started going to a summer camp that does a rock band, and they really enjoyed it," Jenke said. "I started looking around for the rest of the year, and there was really nothing available.

Jenke had no music experience. After speaking with her sons' drum teacher Holly Pintozzi about her desire to provide children a safe place with adult supervision to jam and grow as musicians, they found they were both on the same page.

"[Pintozzi] said she had always wanted to do something like that," Jenke said. "So I told her I can make the business end happen but I need a someone who can make the music happen.

And the music is made weekly at 417 Ogden Ave., Downers Grove, where the academy's concrete building provides the ideal soundproof setting. The school groups teenagers in bands, which are supervised by professional adult musicians, to play rock 'n'roll from different periods.

"A couple weeks before the session begins we figure out who's joining the group and we suit the music best to each group," said Bobby Koutek, the academy's bass and vocal instructor. "There are no limits on what music we do. We do stuff from Green Day to Jefferson Airplane."

Each eight-week session culminates in a live performance at Ballydoyle's Irish Pub in downtown Downers Grove. The summer session will let loose at 3 p.m. Sunday, Aug. 9 at the pub, 5157 Main St.

For students like Thomas White, a 12-year-old Downers Grove resident who had played guitar for the past three sessions at the academy, playing in front of a crowd is what it is all about.

"I really love the concert and the opportunity to play live," he said.

Rock Academy recently celebrated its two-year anniversary, and Jenke is thrilled when she looks back at how far it has come.

"We started our first session with nine kids playing in a church basement," Jenke said. "Since moving [to the Ogden location], we have grown to almost 60 students each session."

Most students learn about the academy through word of mouth, and a majority of them continue on for several sessions. The classes are a balance of fun and serious musicianship.

"We are really laid back, and we have fun, but we expect a lot out of our students," Koutek said. "Kids hardly miss class—they all want to be here. It is not something their parents force them to do."

Group sessions and private lessons are ongoing throughout the year. Group sessions are \$180 per 8-week term. For more information go to [www.rockacademyonline.com](http://www.rockacademyonline.com).

By Elizabeth Vassolo | Triblocal.com reporter

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Thomas White, 12, plays a solo during practice.



Kyleigh Heller, 14, on keyboard accompanies Alayne May, 13.



Drum instructor Jason Styx helps David Knez, 13, and Vince Savino, 13, keep pace.



John Jenke, 16, dons a rock 'n' roll look during his session.



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