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The St. Charles Press

From 68,000 to St. Charles

Nationally acclaimed songwriter John McAndrew visits little town

By Nick Koverman

St. Charles Press Editor

December 22, 2005



Pianist and songwriter John McAndrew shared his message of unity through a multitude of songs that reflect his hope for a better tomorrow.

PHOTO by Nick Koverman

connected as human beings. I want to share with you today the message of how we should treat each other."

He used his lyrics to provide insight into the tangled web of life and a vision for what their world could be, as in the song *This Little Town*.

"Somewhere in this world is a little town, where everybody's really free and safe when the sun goes down...where nobody takes from you...nobody knocks you down...somewhere in this world...there is this little town," he sang.

Whether it was his Billy Joel style of whimsical piano play, his hauntingly velvet voice reminiscent of Elton John, or deep felt soul like the late Ray Charles, McAndrew wrapped you up in warm blanket of words and shared the kind of music that makes your heart smile.

In his song "Good Enough" McAndrew prefaced, "Teachers and coaches may not like to hear this, but you don't have to win all the time." His lyrics echoed the sentiment, "*You will always stumble, you will always fall.*" But it is in getting up and trying again that makes us better than we are today, he added.

With over 25 years of professional experience, McAndrew has lived both the good, and the bad times.

"I wasted a part of my life," he says of his challenges. But it is through that experience that he now finds himself enjoying the "small crowds."

"I'd rather touch a few people really well, than not get through (to people) at all," he said.

Cut from the fabric of "regular people," McAndrew has no aspirations of rock stardom. However, as his professional career stands on the cusp of immortality, McAndrew finds his days of sharing his message with the world's future as precious a gift as the simple Sucrets box in which he holds his guitar picks.

McAndrew was once reviewed in the New York Times. He recalled, "It was a small part in a big blurb."

The "small part" he played in helping the students of St. Charles High School to understand their brotherhood, and their role together, was nothing short of world changing.

Before last Thursday afternoon the name of John McAndrew was as much a mystery to the students of St. Charles High School as is sometimes their feelings toward each other. Day in and day out, the students from various socio-economic, ethnic, racial, and faith backgrounds walk the same halls, eat at the same tables, and learn many of the same lessons. However, what these young spirits all have in common isn't taught in any classroom or spelled out in any book.

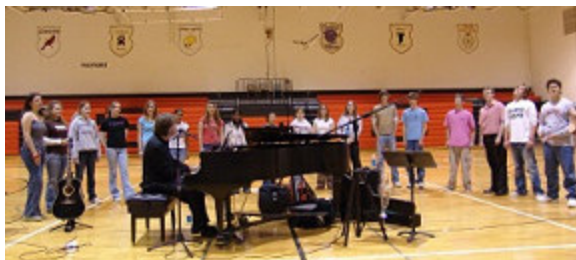
On an invitation from long-time friend and high school guidance counselor Rick Snyder, McAndrew, a professor of life and understanding, shared with the entire student-body his message.

"If you really listen to his songs, they talk about the thread that runs through us all, which ties in perfectly to our anti-bullying program. We're all related, and the number one message is that it's okay to be different; it's okay not to be perfect," Snyder said.

Sitting down at the 88 blacks and whites in the little town's high school gymnasium, McAndrew began, "One way or another, either through the house you live in, your school, or your job, we are all connected as human beings. I want to share with you today the message of how we should treat each other."



McAndrew is a self taught pianist, guitarist, harmonica player, flutist and clarinet player.



John sings a song with some of the students of St. Charles High School.