

# Library offers introductory guitar lessons for all ages

By [Nadya Nataly](#) January 31, 2019

Freeport Memorial Library launched its second eight-week course of free guitar lessons for those of all ages on Jan. 28. Classes are 45 minutes long. They will run through March 25 and end with a recital on April 1 at the library.

The Guitar Project began last September, and held its first recital on Nov. 30. Guitar instructor Chris Gotzen-Berg, of the Legato Foundation, which brings classical music to Long Island communities, said he was excited to start classes again.

“I’m always making sure that I’m giving guitar lessons,” Gotzen-Berg said, “and helping people in any way possible.”

Each Monday, classes are offered at 5 p.m. for third- and fourth-graders, 6 p.m. for fifth- and sixth-graders and 7 p.m. for high school students and adults.

During the 6 p.m. class, Freeport mom Jeannette Acquavella sat in the back and watched her two sons, Tyler, 12, and Matthew, 10, strum basic chords and learn correct finger placement. The boys took the classes last fall as well. Acquavella said that they play clarinet and trumpet at school, but the guitar lessons have allowed them to explore a new instrument. The best part, she said, has been watching them focus on learning to play new songs rather than watching TV or playing video games.

“Learning how to play instruments has helped them put down the video games,” Acquavella said. “There are few things, especially in the winter, that can get them off the couch and get them to do something.”

Gotzen-Berg founded the Legato Foundation in 2016 to bring guitar to students across Long Island. To do so, he hosted a number of fundraisers to raise money to buy guitars and sheet music. He raised roughly \$4,000. Lessons are also funded by an \$1,875 grant from the New York State Council of the Arts and the Huntington Arts Council. Between the fundraising and the grant, Gotzen-Berg said, the classes are free for anyone interested in learning.

Guitars are also available to the participants to check out and play while at the library.

Freeporter Juanita Francois enrolled her son Ethan, 8, in the classes after looking for ways to introduce him to music. The classes, she said, have helped him get to know the guitar and decide whether he wants to try another instrument.

“I think this is so cool,” Ethan said with a smile. “I also want to learn the trumpet.”

Freeporter Bob Dawson waited for his grandson, Mikis Dawson, 9, to finish the class. Though the elder Dawson had wanted Mikis to learn to play the keyboard, the guitar interested the boy more. He takes private lessons, but Dawson loved the idea of a group class that would allow him to socialize with other students who are also learning the instrument. The classes, Dawson said, are an effort to immerse his grandson in a new experience and teach him discipline through music.

“I’m not trying to build a musician,” Dawson said. “I’m trying to build a man, and this is part of the process.”