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LOCAL

THE TOKENS TO PLAY BENEFIT CONCERT FOR SIMI VALLEY EDUCATION FOUNDATION

By Alicia Doyle

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As a member of The Tokens who previously worked as an elementary school teacher for 10 years, Noah Margo is honored to be part of a local show to benefit the Simi Valley Education Foundation.

"We are tremendous supporters of literacy and education," said Margo of Beverly Hills, who has been playing drums with the group for almost 18 years. His father, Phil, and uncle, Mitch, are original members of The Tokens, most popularly known for the song "The Lion Sleeps Tonight."

"We feel, especially during these challenging economic times, that education needs as much attention and financial support as possible and if a school district asks, we'll find some way to help," Margo said.

On April 17, The Tokens will perform a fundraising concert at Santa Susana High School in Simi Valley to benefit the foundation, which was established in 1989 as a way for the community as a whole to help support public schools in Simi Valley.

"Our board of directors is made up of political leaders, business leaders, parents and community volunteers working together to raise money to put back into our schools," said Brian Iverson, president of the Simi Valley Education Foundation. "Our schools need everyone's help now more than ever. With the latest round of budget cuts, we are actually likely to be losing many of our highly qualified teachers and drastically increasing class sizes."

For those unfamiliar with the foundation, "we recently awarded almost \$40,000 to fund 72 separate requests from teachers for help with additional resources in their classrooms," Iverson said.

The group raises funds through a variety of different programs throughout the year, including an annual gala in the spring as well as a yearly golf tournament.

"With fundraising becoming tougher in recent years, we have looked at other ways of raising money," said Iverson. "Our newest idea is our Tokens event. We are having two, family-friendly shows on April 17 at the brand new Santa Susana Performing Arts Center at Santa Susana High School."

Iverson became a fan of The Tokens about 15 years ago when he saw them play a fundraiser for Ventura County Crime Stoppers and other charity events.

"We became friends after I had them play my father's 60th birthday party," Iverson said. "We have talked about doing a charity show for the Simi Valley Education Foundation for years. When I became president of the foundation last year, Noah Margo from The Tokens and I decided, now is the time."

Money raised will help fund student scholarships and allow the foundation to fund many more requests from teachers in the coming year.

"Our schools are receiving less of the resources they need from the school district and state due to budget problems," Iverson said. "Every teacher is working as hard as they can to teach our children with less to work with. Our foundation's primary purpose these days is to help them get additional resources to help them in their classrooms."

The Tokens "put on a high energy, family friendly show," Iverson said. "They mix in comedy and audience participation throughout their show which features many of the hits you will remember from the 50s and 60s. As the years have gone by, their shows have gotten even better."

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