

Viera Voice

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By MIKE GAFFEY / Viera Voice 2015

Renowned musician and philanthropist Arturo Echarte brought his mission to place donated musical instruments into the hands of children from low-income families to Viera. Performing at the April 9 Charlie Corbeil Conservation Awards dinner at Heritage Isle Ballroom, he heralded the event's tandem conservation-themed student arts contest.

Art, photography and writing submissions were on display that evening and youth awards were given at the April 11 Viera Wetlands Nature Festival. "Reaching children through the arts is an extremely effective way to bring them out of their shell to embrace life, to give them a sense of hope in what they can accomplish with their life and in this world," Arturo told the sold-out crowd.

Echarte's Acoustic for a Change mission sparked during a charity event at which he was performing, when yet another attendee came up to share that he had an old instrument at home that was no longer needed. He knew of the need for instruments from performing arts charity events that his wife, Susan, frequently planned. "Many of these children have the musical ability and desire to play music but their families cannot afford to buy them an instrument," Echarte said. "Having their own instrument provides a reprieve from life's stresses, an opportunity to express themselves and a way to create a unique identity." Echarte offers his performance skills at charity events to help nonprofits bring in funds. Because he cannot be all places at once, and to provide a greater variety, he networks with other musicians to lend a hand. "I encourage other musicians to give back a few gigs a year so that worthwhile charity events' musical needs could be affordably filled, and local musicians can get exposure," Echarte said. "Our goal is to become an "Event Support team for Charities." With Susan's event planning skills we can coordinate events and give advice for the best results for each charity. All that we ask is that an announcement be made to the audience about our Instrument Donation Program and that the charity provides a small information table."

Since 2011, Echarte expanded the mission to Southern California where the couple spends four to five months of the year in Dana Point, frequently shipping instruments back to Florida. Success stories abound. An 11-year-old leukemia patient from a military family discovered a happy distraction from frequent hospital stays with his drum kit and lessons provided by Echarte. A Yamaha keyboard donated to a disabled Air Force veteran exposed to chemical warfare helped with his Autonomic Central Nervous System disorder. A boy with a muscular disability living in a homeless tent camp with his sisters and single mom improved his school performance. "In the broader perspective, if you raise a well adjusted child you will have a more civil, balanced adult community and world," Echarte said. "Music and the arts play a large part in creating a well adjusted child."

For more information or to donate, go to AcousticforaChange.com or call 321-544-4949.

