

Community Partners Monthly Highlights

February 2026

In February, musicians served more than **1,000** community members of all ages, through **14** events across **5** New Jersey counties.



UJA-Federation

From February 9–13, Greg LaRosa, LonFon Law, and Juan Martinez traveled to the Jewish Educational Center in Elizabeth, Gottesman RTW Academy in Randolph, Golda Och Academy in West Orange, and Joseph Kushner Hebrew Academy in Livingston as part of the “Global Grooves” tour. They performed melodies from around the world, from Egypt to Brazil, exploring rhythms by encouraging students to tap and clap along! The students had many questions about each instrument, particularly the bass and the box drum, making each lively performance both fun and educational for the elementary audience. These visits were sponsored by the UJA-Federation.

Lunar New Year at The Gables

On February 12, Xin Zhao, Maya Shiraishi, Brett Deubner, and Jonathan Spitz brought a Lunar New Year celebration to The Gables, a senior living community in Princeton Junction. The event included lively rounds of Bingo and small gifts for residents. The musicians also shared a preview of the upcoming season, performing selections such as Bartók’s *Romanian Folk Dances* and Mozart’s *Divertimento*. The afternoon concluded with traditional Chinese melodies that had residents smiling and humming along. This event was sponsored by Bloomberg Philanthropies.



NEW JERSEY SYMPHONY

XIAN ZHANG MUSIC DIRECTOR



NJMEA State Conference

On February 20, Naomi Youngstein, Ming Yang, Izia Weyman, and Laura Andrade presented the Leadership Quartet program at the New Jersey Music Educators Association (NJMEA) State Conference in Atlantic City. Using an “open rehearsal” format, they demonstrated effective communication, phrasing, and leadership in a chamber ensemble, and explored how these strategies translate to the classroom. The engaging workshop offered valuable takeaways for educators along with a live performance by professional musicians. This was presented in partnership with the NJMEA.

Unified Vailsburg Services Organization

From February 18–20, Levi Boylan, Luca Esposito, Angeliqe Montes, and Kathleen Nester visited three different sites at Unified Vailsburg Services Organization (UVSO), including Smith Street, Ivy Hill, and Teen Center schools in Newark. They worked with over 100 preschoolers, introducing their instruments and demonstrating the unique sounds each one makes. Students loved singing and moving along to favorites like "Let It Go" from *Frozen* and “Somewhere Over the Rainbow” from *The Wizard of Oz*. These visits were sponsored by the PNC Foundation.



As always, thank you for your support of the Community Partners program. Stay tuned for the next edition of Monthly Highlights!