



art &
SOCIETY

Blues in the Schools

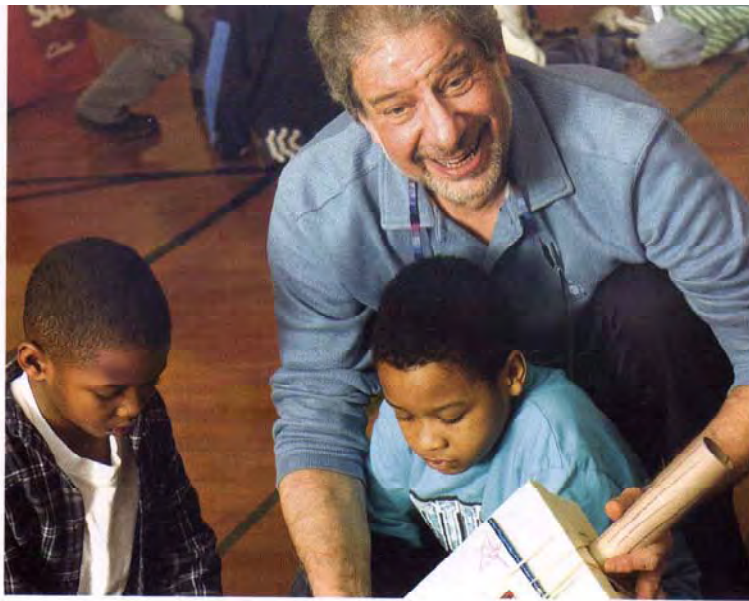
by Jonathan Wright ■ photography by Rick Kessinger



Hawkeye on YouTube!
Watch clips of Hawkeye Herman's performance at Glen Oak Primary School! Visit youtube.com and search for "Hawkeye Herman" for clips from his performance.



Hawkeye Herman teaches Glen Oak students how to make their own instruments out of common household items



Nationally acclaimed music educator brings the blues to Glen Oak Primary School.

On February 25, 2008, the Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Peoria, in partnership with Howard & Howard Attorneys and the Peoria Area Chamber of Commerce Community Leadership School, welcomed the nationally acclaimed musician and educator Michael "Hawkeye" Herman and his *Blues in the Schools* program to Glen Oak Primary School. The award-winning program, initiated nearly three decades ago, teaches students about the roots of blues music and its significant impact on popular American culture.

"My mission is to let young folks know that the blues is an important aspect of American music history, influencing other styles of music in the past, right up to the present," explained Hawkeye. "Blues is the real deal, the story of the human experience, and that will always hold a place in the hearts and minds of the people. I'm trying to ensure, through my educational programs and workshops, that future generations are aware of their own rich musical heritage."

Approximately 270 students from kindergarten through third grade attended the event. After a hearty introduction from District Councilman Bob Manning, Hawkeye spent nearly an hour captivating the kids with a mix of classic blues, call-and-response sing-a-longs and lessons in history, and even science. He touched on the origins of the blues in the cotton fields of the South and demonstrated the wonders of *tension* and *vibration* as they relate to the workings of guitars. From his years of experience, Hawkeye understood that one cannot lose the kids' attention for even a second. Fortunately, this wasn't a problem, as the excited chatter and wide grins on the children's faces proved.

The morning assembly was followed by two afternoon sessions, in which the students learned how to create their own musical instruments out of common household items. And so it was that bottles and beans were magically transformed into maracas, and pie plates and "jingly things" became tambourines. Boxes and pencils became drums and drumsticks, and shoeboxes and rubber bands became guitars.

After the students had created and decorated their instruments, Hawkeye led them in a raucous jam session that shook the entire school. At the end of the day, rounds of the catchy theme song, "The Blues Had a Baby and They Called it Rock n' Roll," could be heard echoing through the hallways, led over the intercom by Glen Oak Principal Eric Thomas.

Later that evening, Hawkeye gave a special, intimate performance at the Waterhouse. This event was open to the public and served as a fundraiser for the local Boys and Girls Clubs chapter. It was a satisfying end to a great day. For more information on Michael "Hawkeye" Herman, visit hawkeyeherman.com. ■

