

Star Search winner Vickie Natale sings for CSMA

By Wendy Marinaccio
Special to the Town Crier

Vickie Natale, adult vocal grand champion of CBS' 2003 Star Search competition, collaborated with the Community School of Music and Arts (CSMA) and the Heart of Silicon Valley (HOSV) to present a benefit concert last Sunday.

The Brooklyn-born singer performed at the event, produced by HOSV, to benefit CSMA's campaign for its first permanent facility.

Proceeds will assist CSMA in matching a \$750,000 challenge grant from the Kresge Foundation, which must be raised by Jan. 1, according to Evy Schiffman, director of marketing and communications at CSMA. "We are doing this benefit concert to raise funds for the facility and draw attention to the importance of music and arts education," she said.

The 22-year-old Natale won \$200,000 and a recording contract with Sony for winning Star Search. Sunday's benefit, held at a private home in Atherton, was her Northern California debut. She said the Bay Area "chose her" as a performance site.

Backed by a four-piece funk band, Natale performed songs including "Savin' All My Love For You," the piece that clinched her Star Search victory; Stevie Wonder's "All In Love Is Fair," which he heard her perform live at New York's Sugar Bar; and several of her own compositions, including "Keep On," a piece she wrote following the 9/11 attacks.

Silent and live auction items supported the musical theme by including a necklace Natale wore during the performance, a concert by CSMA faculty members and an original song written by HOSV songwriters and recorded by Natale.

"There's such a neat symmetry" between the organizations, said Yvonne Wolters, one of the HOSV's principals. The group connects performers with non-profit organizations related to their interests and produces concerts to raise money for charity.

Everyone involved in Sunday's benefit has "passion for giving back to our community, letting the skills we have work for our community ... and, of course, we all have a love for music."

"There's a real need" for an organization like CSMA whether one is inter-



TOWN CRIER ARCHIVES

Vickie Natale, the "Star Search" champion from Brooklyn, tours the new Community School of Music & Arts facility last Wednesday. Pictured with Natale, second from left, is Evy Schiffman, communications director for the school.

ested in music for recreation or as a career," Wolters said. "Even in Natale's case, CSMA could have made a great impact.

"(Natale is) a very talented musician and yet didn't have the financial ability to find her way through music early on," Wolters said.

Natale, who attended public schools and later studied music at the Mannes College of Music, said her high school music teacher donated private lessons to her "because she saw the diamond in the rough." Natale said, "I always knew that I wanted to study music and wanted to absorb as much information about my craft as possible. I didn't want to be just another singer."

As a result of her Star Search victory, she was able to pay off her student loans. "I paid for my schooling in music by singing, and it felt so good to be able to do that," she said.

Natale, who worked as a music teacher, is devoted to music education. She performed last Wednesday at Slater School for third-through fifth-graders who participate in a CSMA program there.

"I talked about how I related to them," Natale said. "I told them, 'I was just like you — I was here sitting where you're sitting and seeing inspirational people and dreaming.'"

For more information about Natale, logon to www.vickienatalemusic.com.

For upcoming HOSV benefits and membership information, logon to www.hosv.org; for information about donating to CSMA's capital campaign, logon to www.csma.org.

Community School of Music and Arts near completion

Town Crier Staff Report

The long-awaited home for the Community School of Music and Arts is nearing completion at 230 San Antonio Circle, Mountain View. The school's staff plan to move into their new space Dec. 15 and to be ready to receive students there in early January. A grand opening celebration for the public is scheduled for March 6.

Motorists near the cloverleaf on San Antonio Road can keep tabs on the building's progress as they make their daily commute. Hefty wedges of poured concrete frame the sky above the one-story rectangular entrance to the 25,000-square-foot facility designed by Mark Cavagnero Associates of San Francisco and built by Rudolph & Sletten. Large windows punctuate the glare of the still-white exterior walls. Inside, construction noises from outside and even traffic sounds from San Antonio and Central Expressway are inaudible.

"Our three criteria when we designed this building were safety and accessibility for students, superior acoustics and lots of natural light," said Evy Schiffman, CSMA's marketing and communications director, as she led a tour through the light-filled rooms.

Outreach programs in local public and private schools, in addition to art exhibits, festivals, concerts and recitals for the general public enable CSMA to serve 30,000 children and adults annually, Schiffman said. She estimates that the new facility will enable CSMA to serve 25 percent to 30 percent more of the community.

The school's interim location is 220 View St., Mountain View.