

TEACHERS: Show Goers Play Role

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The music and art programs at Rancho Santa Fe's one elementary and one middle school (grades six through eight) were canceled this year due to budgetary cutbacks brought on by Proposition 13, Supt. Roger Rowe said. Until last June 30, a part-time music teacher had taught about 25 hours a week while an art teacher had taught fewer hours.

Regulars Pick Up Slack

Picking up the slack this year have been the 16 regular teachers, who often have little or no training in music and art, Rowe said.

In September, Jeff Brown, a land developer living in the community, suggested that the musical revue concept, which in past years had helped fund youth activities, could pay for new teachers.

Brown majored in music in college and decided that a musical spoof on life in the wealthy community might draw audiences. He composed 21 musical numbers — some original and some to popular scores — and wrote a number of acts poking fun at the community's parking problems, horseback riding, soap operas and golfers.

The 1½-hour revue is "all G-type and good clean fun," Brown

said, adding that the show would not embarrass or offend anyone.

The show's director, Dennis O'Drane, who also is music coordinator for the Poway Unified School District, said the response to the casting call was so strong that Brown was forced to enlarge the original cast.

Cast Enlarged

Brown had wanted to confine the roles to 20 people, but the final cast was 12 elementary schoolchildren, 6 teen-agers and 25 adults.

"It got hard for Jeff to turn people down," O'Drane said. Among the cast members are Brown's wife Marlena and 8-year-old daughter Kristen.

O'Drane and choreographer Sue Gilson of Palomar College are the only paid members of the production crew. O'Drane said the cast has rehearsed for seven weeks for the March 26 opening performance.

"I've never seen anything like this," O'Drane said of the cast's enthusiasm. He said many cast members had no experience before they were selected for the revue.

O'Drane said music and art programs are being threatened in other districts and predicted they may try something like the Rancho Santa Fe effort. But he doubted they

would have the same level of success unless their residents were as committed or wealthy as those in Rancho Santa Fe.

Wealthy District

While Rancho Santa Fe residents generally are wealthy, the school district itself no longer can tap into the wealth by assessing property taxes to finance certain programs. The district, Supt. Rowe said, is largely dependent on state financial assistance.

Rowe is the district's only administrator and doubles as principal of the elementary and middle schools. The music and art programs, Rowe said, had become a luxury that the district could not afford this year, even on a part-time basis.

"There are very few special programs remaining," Rowe added.

He said there is no school cafeteria and no buses for students. In addition, the district has relied for the past seven years on volunteer teacher aides to help coach athletics, teach summer school and even provide legal assistance.

What happens to the music and art programs after the two years?

"I think we'll just have to come up with some other creative way to fund them," Brown said.