

local news

After-School Workshop Draws Lots Of Buffalo Parents

Nearly 1,000 people were expected at Tuesday's adult-only event.

By **ETHAN PALMER**
Daily Sun Staff Writer

School typically lets out mid-afternoon.

But Tuesday, The Villages High School stayed open well into the evening hours for hundreds of parents who took part in an annual two-hour workshop.

It wasn't the typical after-school meeting as parents roamed the halls before settling into classrooms spread throughout the high school campus to hear their choice of some 40 presentations.

"This is the one time during the year where we break off into small groups for two separate hourlong sessions," said Esi Cosenza, mother to a sixth-grader named Joey.

Cosenza also serves as the vice president of the Buffalo PRIDE organization — the charter school's equivalent to a parent-teacher association.

"It is always one of our most well-attended events among parents, and I think it really comes down to the wide variety of topics."

Tuesday's adult-only event covered everything from improving study habits and summertime learning opportunities, to preparing finances for college, pros and cons of participating in athletic programs and much more.

The night kicked off with a message over the school's intercom from Sumter County Sheriff's Sgt. Lawrence "LJ" Wynn.

Wynn, who leads the Sumter County Sheriff's School Resource Division, addressed widespread concerns about an incident that took place earlier in the day that resulted in all school buildings being put on official lockdown, lasting

42 minutes after a report of a suspicious person, perhaps carrying a weapon, in the vicinity.

That incident, which turned out to be a false alarm, resulted in a suspect being apprehended but eventually being set free after being questioned by sheriff's deputies.

After the announcement in a presentation focused on the topic of school security, Wynn commended students, staff, teachers and parents for what he referred to as "100 percent cooperation."

"You all should be very proud of how they handled the situation," said Wynn, speaking to about 85 parents in the school cafeteria.

A short walk and turn down the hallway, VHS vice principal Robin Grant led a presentation on another serious topic — bullying.

Typically, classroom No. 130 would be filled with about two dozen teens and young adults on any given school day.

But this time, Grant, also the father to a VHS sophomore, spoke to an audience of a different generation.

He talked about staying vigilant in monitoring the use of social media and answered questions regarding the school's policy on technology use and bullying.

"Know what your kids are doing," said Grant, standing at a podium in the front of the room. "Cyberbullying is one of the worst parts of bullying in general, and it's all right at our fingertips. I hate social media, to be honest with you. I think it's a huge detriment to our kids."

Other workshop sessions took on a more lighthearted tone.

One presentation focused on easy, home-cooked meals and gave parents a new recipe to try — roasted garlic chicken wings baked to tender perfection in an instant pot.

Meanwhile another group went head-to-head in a web-based trivia game called "Kahoot," generating a healthy dose of friendly competition.

That presentation revolved around the topic of incorporating more technology at home.

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National Symphony Orchestra Of Cuba Plays The Sharon

The group filled the venue with vibrant tones during a concert Tuesday night.

By **KRISTEN FIORE**
Daily Sun Staff Writer



Michael Johnson | Daily Sun

The first song began with the string instruments only, and it was soft, sweet and a little sad. But then, with a burst of sound, the rest of the instruments joined in, creating a song and story that was playful, frantic, elegant and patriotic all at once.

The National Symphony Orchestra of Cuba filled the Sharon L. Morse Performing Arts Center to the brim with the warm, rich music of Tchaikovsky, Roldan, Mozart, de

Falla and Beethoven.

Robert Wessels, of Summerfield, came to the concert because his father was a guest conductor in the Symphony Orchestra of Havana, one of the earlier

incarnations of the National Symphony Orchestra of Cuba.

Wessels said his father was in an orchestra where they lived in Dutch Guyana, and he grew up around classical music.

Wessels expertly chose a seat in the center of the theater for Tuesday's performance.

"After we moved to New York, my father would take me to Carnegie Hall and I would sit there and listen," Wessels said. "That's why I know where to sit."

Wessels said the National Symphony Orchestra of Cuba's rendition of "1812 Overture" by Tchaikovsky was the best he ever heard.

The conductor, Enrique Pérez Mesa, moved his arms up and down gracefully, synchronized with the soft rising and falling of the musicians' bows.

The orchestra worked skillfully as one moving part, creating music that portrayed emotions and told stories.

The songs spoke of love,

conflict and adventure, and were communicated through rattling drums, chiming flutes and groaning cellos.

For Mozart's "Clarinet Concerto in A Major," the featured clarinet player was Antonio Dorta Lazo, who showed the many ranges that a clarinet is capable of, from a carefree flutter to an eerie and otherworldly inflection.

"I thought the clarinet was haunting," said Susan Crawford, of the Village of Calumet Grove. "The range of sound was fantastic."

Crawford also noted that she was impressed by the diversity in age of the members of the orchestra.

Sandy Melow, of the Village of Duval, said she came to the concert because she has visited Cuba.

It was her first time at an orchestra concert, and the National Symphony Orchestra of Cuba set the bar high.

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