



Living Life Through Music



Chester resident and musician Margie Warner teaches music at 21 area schools. **Photos by Nancy Dionne**

Margie Warner Releases Debut CD for Kids

By Lorin Cipolla
Special to Living

Chester's Margie Warner knows what makes kids tick, after all, she has been teaching music since 1979 and travels weekly to 21 local schools to bring music to the pint-sized masses. Warner recently wrapped up the recording of her first CD, *Singin' Round the Campfire with Margie*, on which she sings and plays guitar, accompanied by Phil Rosenthal of Guilford on banjo.

Warner believes that music should always be a part of a child's life and that kids should constantly be learning through music. Her CD features many of her original songs as well as some traditional tunes arranged for today's kids. She helps to keep these great American campfire songs alive by singing them with local children every day.

The following is an interview

with the local songstress one recent rainy day at her Chester home over mugs of herbal tea with her upbeat CD playing along in the background. She talked about her music, the new CD, and what's to come.

Q: Your new CD not only features your voice but the voices of children. Were they part of the recording process?

A: I literally plucked these kids from a campfire sing we had at a party. I wanted to make sure that they were all local, regular, neighborhood kids. None of the

kids are professionally trained and they're so darned cute. I was after multiples. I invited the Clar-

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—Margie Warner

kin family from Ivoryton because they have four kids, three of which I have in class, and their ages range and I'm a big mixed-age fan. We had the four- and five-year-old microphone and then the medium-sized microphone with the six- and seven-year-olds, and the big mic with the eight- to ten-year-olds. It was like the three bears and the porridge!

Q: This is your first CD. What took you so long to record?

A: My friend [actor] Peter Waller said to me, "You want to get this recording done and I don't see you doing anything about it." I told him that I was afraid and didn't know where to begin and he said, "Just do it!" and then gave me the name of Phil Rosenthal, a very accomplished musician from Guilford. I knew it was a perfect match because Phil's banjo goes well with my rhythm guitar.

Q: Are you planning to venture back into the studio to record a follow-up disc?

A: This one needs to get out there first so I'm totally going to focus on that, although CD number two is already percolating in my head, ready to pop out.

Q: You seem to be a very visual person. Would you consider releasing a DVD?

A: The curriculum [Warner developed a musical pre-k curriculum in 1997] itself needs to be on

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DVD because it is much more visual. There's a certain style that I teach. I don't teach music to children; I teach them what they need to know to live life musically. It's a regular old preschool curriculum where they learn the four seasons and the days of the week, and it's all done to music. We all need to do more singin' around the campfire. They're not teaching *Oh Susannah!* and *Polly Wolly Doodle* [both on her CD] anymore, and that part of America is going to get lost.

Q: So do I dare ask about music programs across the country being cut from school budgets?

A: Believe it or not, as much as Connecticut prides itself on good education—and we do have one of the best—years ago this state had the lowest amount of time devoted to music in music class itself. Kids were only getting 20 minutes a week. Chester has now moved into a situation where [elementary school music teacher] Meg Gister has them [the kids] all the time. It used to be uncool to be in the school band, but now at Chester Elementary School if you're not in the band, you're not cool.

My feeling is that music education should be an hour every day. Music should be integrated into each subject because we are all very musical.

Q: You work with kids all day every day. Can you describe one of your favorite experiences with kids?

A: Part of the reason that I love working with kids is how open and honest they are. There are so many situations where a kid will just blurt out what's on his mind and it cracks me up. Being a teacher I do have to keep a certain decorum and I had just spent five minutes on the importance of raising your hand before you speak up and why, and the kids got all quiet and all of a sudden this little hand goes up and I said, "Yes, Jimmy?" and he said, "My dad has green toenails." It was just random and it had nothing to do with what we were talking about.

Q: Do any of these random blurts make their way into your songs?

A: My biggest hit this summer was called *Rocks in My Socks* and it started at Schoolmates in Ivoryton and it was another one of those random things. This little girl says "Miss Margie I have rocks in my socks" and I looked at her and I said, "Well I guess it's better than ants in your pants."

Q: Do you ever actually write a song while in the classroom?

A: I get my ideas from the kids and then I mull them over. I keep a pad of paper on my nightstand and I wake up in the middle of the night and say, "That's it!" The song *Ear-Wiggie* started because as a child I had a fear of earwigs and in my family you're not allowed to

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Warner strikes a pose with the first \$10 she ever made as a musician as well as with her first CD, *Singin' Round the Campfire with Margie*, which is in stores now.

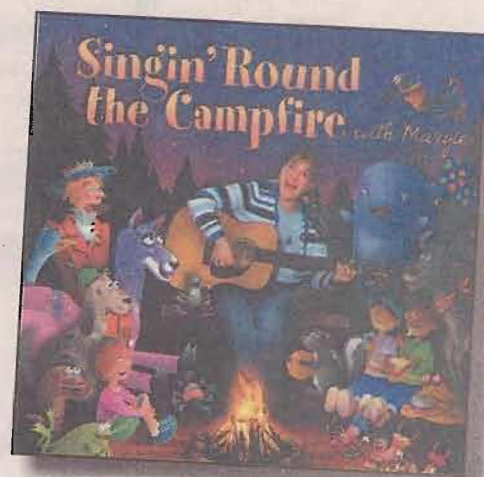
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be afraid of anything. You either have to make fun of yourself or you have to look at the bright side. I decided that in life we are allowed to not like certain things so I call the *Ear-Wiggie* song the anti-bug song.

Q: Your songs are so funny and kid-friendly. Do most of them have an underlying message?

A: *Everything* I do has a message. I am from such a musical family that I think I have resources that have camped out in my heart. I learned so much music as a kid, it was just bursting to get out so that when I had my own kids it was probably the trigger and I thought, 'Ooh I have a chance to play again!' I look at pictures of me from when I was in the corporate world and I look at me now and I think that



would have destroyed me if I had stayed in business for so long—I looked almost 10 years older than my age 20 years ago and I sang my way out of it.

For more information about Margie Warner, visit www.MusicWithMargie.com or call 860-526-5794. *Singin' Round the Campfire* CDs (\$15) are available locally at Celebrations in Deep River, The Red Balloon in Essex, Stork Exchange and The Other Place gift shop in Old Saybrook, Kid's Stuff Consignment in Haddam, Funky Monkey Toys in Killingworth, and Belles and Beaus in Madison.

Warner will also hold mini-concerts for young families and sign copies of her CD on Friday, Nov. 18, at 4 p.m. at Henry Carter Hull Library on Rte. 81 in Clinton and at the Brainerd Memorial Library on Rte. 154 in Haddam on Wednesday, Nov. 25, at 4:30 p.m.