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ALLSTON BRIGHTON

Horace Mann School for Deaf looks to turn insensitive prank involving Taylor Swift into a positive

Posted by Matt Rocheleau August 30, 2012 05:45 PM

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By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

Leaders of an Allston school for children who are deaf and hard of hearing are looking to turn an insensitive Internet prank into something positive.

Young pop-sensation Taylor Swift recently announced that she will perform a live concert at whichever school in the country receives the most online votes through a promotional campaign.

As reported by the blog [Gawker](#), online [pranksters](#) tried this week to make fun of Swift by voting, and recruiting others to vote, for her to perform at the Horace Mann School for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing in Allston.

But, despite what the web pranksters might have believed, people who are deaf enjoy music.

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And, the school's headmaster, Jeremiah Ford, said he would be thrilled to have Swift perform at the school, should they win the voting.

Through vibrations, visuals and other assistance, people who are deaf and hard of hearing can sense, [compose](#) and perform music.

"There are accommodations that make music come alive for deaf people," Ford said by phone Thursday. "They have different abilities. They're not disabled. They're not impaired."

"It might have been done with mal intent, and shame on them, but what a great opportunity for us," he added.

He said he sees the situation as a teachable moment.

"The whole message is deaf people can do anything they want to do. And they do," Ford said. "There's no stopping anybody."

The school is part of the Boston Public Schools system and has ties to historical figures, including Helen Keller and Alexander Graham Bell, officials said. Founded in 1869, it is the oldest public day school for people who are deaf and hard of hearing in the country.

"But, I think the most important history of the school is the people – the students, families and teachers – who work here every day," Ford said. "Students who leave here have become very successful."

As part of the "Taylor Swift on Campus" contest, the top five vote-getting schools would each get \$10,000 grant to help fund their music departments.

Ford said any money the school might receive for placing well in the voting would benefit the students, some of whom are involved in drumming, among other acoustic activities. The school used to have a music teacher and has talked about reviving the program.

"We have such great programs here, people call it the hidden gem in Boston schools," he said. "We can always use more support and [having Swift perform there would be] a great way to shed light on us."

"I'm a lemonade from lemons kind of guy," he said.



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Voting in the Swift concert contest began on Aug. 21 and runs through midnight Sept. 23.

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