



PHOTO: THOMAS BALSAMO

DR. TOM LEONARD is the superintendent of Barrington 220 schools. He may be reached at tleonard@barrington220.org or by phone at 847-842-3588.

Looking Over the Rainbow

All directions point to partnership and progress in Barrington 220.

THOSE CLOSE TO ME KNOW of the few passions I try to pursue whenever I can squeak out some free time, such as playing the piano. I love the great American standards, particularly when performed on a lone keyboard in a quiet room. The slow, romantic, and sometimes melancholy refrains are my favorites. Many of these classics from the 1930s and '40s were simultaneous with timeless musicals and movies.

Like any good instructor, my piano teacher lets me explore the music I love. Recently she offered the classic ballad, "(Somewhere) Over the Rainbow," penned by Harold Arlen and E.Y. (Yip) Harburg. Although this is an old song from 1938, it is still played regularly and recognized by most generations thanks to Judy Garland's rendition. As evidence of the song's ageless appeal, in 2001 the National Endowment for the Arts ranked "Over the Rainbow" first in its *Songs of the Century* compilation.

The tune does have an interesting history, as it was almost cut from the 1939 movie, "The Wizard of Oz." Legendary MGM executive, Louis B. Mayer, thought the song "slowed down the picture," but his producers threatened to quit the film if it was removed. Their protests were effective and

Mayer allowed the song to remain.

The melody is wonderful, but the words are magical. While the great lyricist Ira Gershwin is not credited, he reportedly helped pen the final stanza during a late-night songwriting session. Trying to meet MGM's deadline, Arlen and Harburg had worked for hours, but a final verse eluded them. Tired and impatient, Gershwin supposedly said, "What about 'Birds fly over the rainbow. So why can't I?'" This led to the classic ending, "If happy little bluebirds fly beyond the rainbow, why, oh why can't I?" According to author and musician Michael Feinstein, when Gershwin was asked why he blurted out the line, he replied matter-of-factly, "Because it was late and I wanted to get to bed."

Like the song, the film is an emotional narrative, ranging from black-and-white to Technicolor and transporting the viewer from Kansas to Oz, a fantasy world beyond the mind's eye.

So how does reflecting on a song and a nearly 75-year-old movie relate to our schools? Like being swept from Kansas into Oz, we live in a whirlwind of trying to prepare students for careers not yet in existence today. It is almost as if we are in a monochrome landscape, trying to ready children for a vivid and three-dimensional experience

(Story continued next page)

BAND TOGETHER MUSIC FEST: Give It Up for 220

Enjoy hearing Dr. Leonard play piano during this all-ages concert, showcasing the talent of youth and adult musicians affiliated with Barrington 220 schools. Celebrate the power of music and community while helping raise money to support the Barrington 220 Educational Foundation.

The Barrington 220 Educational Foundation is a nonprofit volunteer organization that funds classroom endeavors not supported by tax revenues. Proceeds enable major instructional programs, such as Project Lead the Way, as well as Helping Hand grants, and Projects for Innovation and Enhancement. Tickets and sponsorships for this music showcase are available at www.220foundation.org.

EVENT DETAILS:

- Saturday, Feb. 23
- Wool Street Grill & Sports Bar, located at 128 Wool St., in Barrington
- All ages from 5 to 7 p.m. \$10 per person or \$30 per family
- After 7 p.m., \$25 per person
- Only ages 21 and over admitted after 8 p.m.
- Food and drink are not included.

PILATES STUDIO6



Personalized instruction on the best equipment for your best body.

847-602-8001 / www.pilatesstudio6.com / Chris Girard, Owner and Certified Instructor



“somewhere over the rainbow” of our imagination.

Just as Dorothy did not have to travel Oz alone – and just as Arlen and Harburg welcomed Gershwin’s small, but genius suggestion – in Barrington 220 we need many contributors to help us arrive at our destination and to complete the chorus.

In our dynamic and capable network of villages, the basics of education find synergy with time and assets to support cultural experiences, emerging technologies, diverse languages, and an unending list of other initiatives.

Parent-Teacher Organizations, the Barrington 220 Educational Foundation, booster clubs, and alumni, as well as individuals who partner with us to stretch our thinking and innovation, are all keys to ensuring students have the skills necessary for their journeys through life. Even *One Book, One Barrington* exemplifies how following the yellow brick road of resourceful alliances can enhance a proven community program.

I hope readers will scan the Barrington 220 e-newsletters (available free for anyone to subscribe to at barrington220.org/enewsletters), or “Like” the school district’s Facebook page, or follow us on Twitter. Through any of these avenues, you can stay apprised of some exciting partnerships currently in the works, including one close to my heart: the evolving BHS Entrepreneurial Project, a novel new collaboration that may lead some of our students over the rainbow to obtain, or perhaps to create, those unforeseen jobs of the future.

Just like Oz, I think of Barrington 220 as a charmed place for our children and our communities. At the very least, we hope to be a unique setting, as another treasured old song suggests, “East of the Sun (and West of the Moon).” That will have to wait for the next article, after I find a copy of the sheet music. 