



School of Piano Technology for the Blind awarded \$36,411 Firstenburg Foundation Grant

News Release from **School of Piano Technology for the Blind**
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The School of Piano Technology for the Blind has been awarded a \$36,411 grant through the Firstenburg Foundation. The grant will provide the final funding required to implement the school's two-year Director of Instruction Succession Plan. Initial funding of \$78,963 for the \$119,233 three phase plan was provided through the Gibney Family Foundation with the stipulation the school raise the remaining dollars. The Community Foundation for SW Washington also contributed to the succession plan through a grant in June of this year.

Lori Amstutz, a 2007 graduate of the school and owner of Amstutz Piano Tuning and Repair in Alberta, Canada, was tapped for the position following an intensive recruitment and interview process last spring. She will begin working with the school's Director of Instruction, Don Mitchell, to learn the school's unique one-on-one curriculum and teaching methodology.

Mitchell has been employed by the School for 44 years and although no specific retirement date has been determined, the two-year succession plan will allow for a smooth transition in the future when Mitchell does decide to reduce his work commitment and/or retire.

Executive Director Cheri Martin shared, "We are extremely grateful to the Firstenburg Foundation for recognizing the importance of providing the final funding required to implement the succession plan. The Director of Instructor position is the lifeblood of the school and far too critical to be left vacant or filled by anyone but the most qualified person. The succession plan will allow for the significant time and attention required to train a new instructor while ensuring the school's institutional knowledge, history, and legacy are preserved.

The School of Piano Technology for the Blind is the only school in the world dedicated to teaching blind and visually impaired individuals piano tuning and technology. For more information about the school, please visit the website at www.pianotuningschool.org.

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The School of Piano Technology for the Blind was founded in 1949 by Emil Fries, a blind teacher and tuner who had a vision to start a school that would teach blind and visually impaired students the skills of piano tuning and repair so they could earn a good living and enjoy independent, productive lives in a financially rewarding profession. Since the School's inception, more than 300 graduates have gone on to good careers in universities, music stores, school districts, and most often operating their own business.