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Embracing technology, Jacksonville company looks to raise next generation of musicians

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Since 1836, Buffet Crampon has consistently done one thing: make instruments. But recently they've started emphasizing music education, making sure playing music — especially on woodwind and brass instrument — isn't lost on a new generation.

Just last month, Francois Kloc, president and CEO of Buffet Crampon USA, which is headquartered in Jacksonville, traveled to Washington, D.C. as part of the National Association of Music Merchants' Advocacy Fly-In to lobby for music education funding in schools.

The Jacksonville office houses the company's U.S. corporate headquarters, as well as a warehouse that stores and ships out instruments from the company's manufacturing facilities in France and Germany. The company's international headquarters are located in France.

Kloc and 100 others with the association met with senators and congressmen to ensure music education in K-12 schools is fully funded, meaning \$1.6 billion a year. Kloc said the proposed budget for the 2018 state implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act contains zero funding for music education.



JAMES CRICHLOW

Kloc said the arts, especially music, are key to students having a well-rounded education.

"There are a lot of schools that depend on that funding from the federal government and if that funding isn't there, then those programs are going to go away," Kloc said. "Then the kids, what are they going to do? You strip them of an opportunity to do something with their lives."

For many students, classes in school are the only way they'll ever be exposed to music. And when they are exposed to music, oftentimes other activities or school work get in the way of taking music seriously.

New technologies especially are keeping kids from pursuing music.

"People always ask 'Who is your competition?' and they always think it's going to be Yamaha, Selmer or one of the brands we compete with," Kloc said. "My competition is the iPhone."

That's the reason why Buffet Crampon launched an app, Urban Play, which allows young musicians to practice their playing with modern music playing behind them. They also developed and launched PlayWind, which provides students with video tutorials, masterclasses and technical information so they can learn and practice from home.

These apps, Kloc said, will allow Buffet Crampon to better reach a crucial demographic.

"That's the way for us to be visible and attract some people to move on our side," Kloc said.

But while Kloc said he wants kids to try any sort of music, he would prefer they play woodwinds or brass – the instruments Buffet Crampon produces. Those instruments, however, are more difficult to market for a young person.

"What are we doing to convince that kid that he should play a wind instrument versus guitar drums or keyboard, which often is seen as cooler, because 'I play bass, I play drums, I'm the cool kid at school,'" Kloc said. "If you play oboe or bassoon, like I did, it's kind of like, 'who's that weirdo?' It's a bit more difficult."

An added emphasis on music education and youth, however, won't change Buffet Crampon's longstanding goal.

"We want to continue to grow," Kloc said, "and make sure we're here to provide great instruments for people to play."

Katie Garwood

Intern



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