New Gatton Piano

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A new grand piano at the Gatton Academy will benefit students for generations to come.

The piano is being dedicated to a professor near and dear to Gatton as Amy Bingham explains in this week’s View from the Hill.

Retired English Professor Walker Rutledge has a unique bond with Gatton Academy students. That’s why, when they decided to raise money to replace their piano, they thought naming it for him would be a fitting tribute.

 “Every single day the piano is being played and it’s being played by multiple students.”

Students like recent Gatton graduate Richard Pike.

 “It was fun to kind of do it with some of the other people from Gatton too cause some of the other students knew how to play or some of them knew how to sing or something.”

The old piano was gifted to Gatton when it opened in 2007. It was so loved that it needed to be replaced.

 “I think the low chords were kind of muddy on the other one. This one has good sounding low chords. It has no sticky keys or anything like that. It just plays a lot better.”

Completely privately funded, a matching gift of fifteen thousand dollars was paired with money raised through an on-line spirit funder campaign.

 “There were 75 gifts from current students, alumni, parents and former parents of Gatton students, people who care about music and who care about the Gatton Academy.”

One person who cares a lot about the Gatton Academy is Walker Rutledge.

 “I have absolutely treasured my experience with them.”

The longtime WKU English teacher spent six summers teaching a literacy class to Gatton students in Harlaxton. He began each class by playing a tune.

 “We would meet right after breakfast and often students had been up late and so it announces that class is about to begin.”

The piano is named for Rutledge to honor his recent retirement.

 “He’s also synonymous with music as well as teaching English to our students, so marrying all those ideas together naming the piano for him made natural sense to us.”

Giving STEM students a chance to embrace their liberal arts interest as well.

 “It’s a great place for our students to express themselves, it’s a great place for them to unwind after they come out of maybe a stressful day.”

Walker Rutledge began teaching at WKU in 1969. A small gathering is planned to dedicate the piano in his name tomorrow afternoon at 3:30.

With this week’s View from the Hill, I’m Amy Bingham.

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