

And the Grammy goes to...

Las Vegas Academy named Signature School, receives grant

By LAURA EMERSON

VIEW STAFF WRITER

The end of the school year brought a sweet surprise for the Las Vegas Academy of International Studies, Performing and Visual Arts.

For the sixth time, the Clark County School District's fine arts magnet school was named

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DAVID SEARS
SENIOR DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION,
GRAMMY FOUNDATION

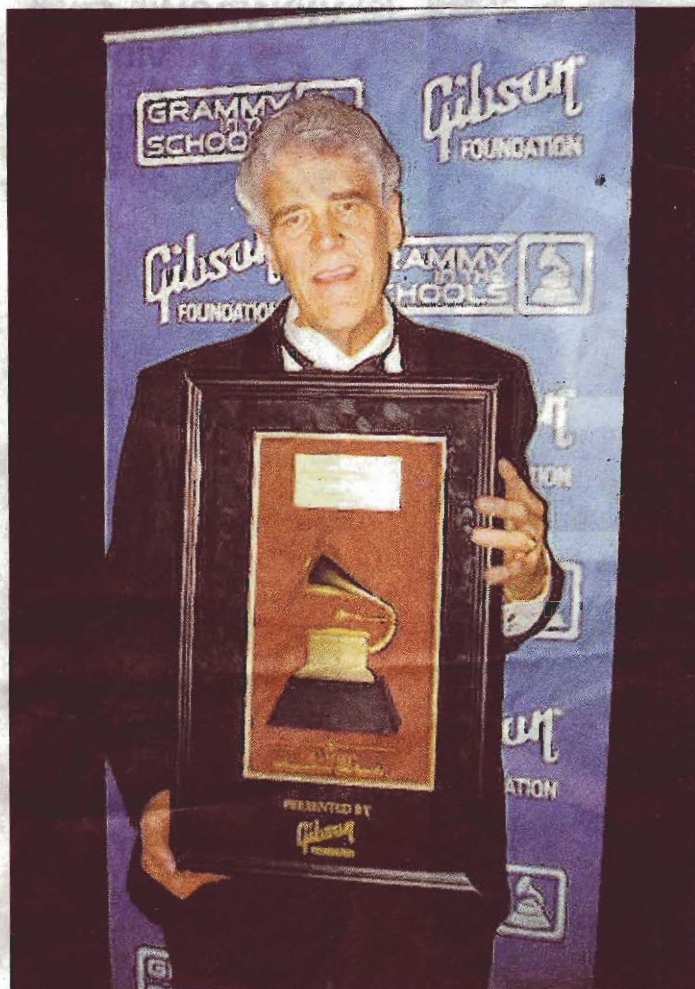
as one of three Grammy Signature Schools in the gold category, nationwide, by the Grammy Foundation. The campus' music department also received a \$5,000 grant from the organization.

In Bill Swick's guitar classroom at the academy, single chairs face empty music stands. School is just about finished. It is Swick's seventh year teaching at the high school in downtown Las Vegas, and he has an established classroom.

One item, though not his alone, sticks out in the front of the room. It's the school's most recent Grammy.

"The school district should be proud that they have students of this caliber," Swick said.

As part of its application process for the Grammy, the Las Vegas Academy music department submitted a 20-minute recording that included samples of all of its musical



SPECIAL TO VIEW

Bill Swick, a guitar teacher at the Las Vegas International Academy of Performing & Visual Arts, holds a 2009 Grammy Signature Schools Gold Award during a Grammy celebration at the school on May 28. The gold award is one of only two such awards that were given out by the Grammy Foundation in 2009 and came with a \$5,000 grant.

education offerings. The recording included the school's choirs, jazz band and ensembles, orchestras, concert band, guitar, piano, hand bells and mariachi students.

"They are one of the best high school music programs in the country," David Sears, senior director of education for the Grammy Foundation, said.

Sears said the school won because it has a great wind ensemble and the overall program stood out among the other high schools.

"The strings were not afraid to play difficult music," Sears said.

A portion of judging includes the variety of music offerings at a given school, and in a time when schools are axing music programs, Las Vegas Academy offers a wide variety. Students in the music majors spend 84 minutes a day in class studying their craft.

"The contact time is about double what a student has at a comprehensive high school," Swick said.

While being recognized as one of the top three music programs in the nation is a great honor, it also helps the academy gain access to

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Grammy-specific events and programs designed for high school students.

Since being involved with the foundation, the Las Vegas Academy, 315 S. 7th St., has participated in exclusive functions, including attending the Latin Grammys in Las Vegas, being treated to a private concert with Carrie Underwood and receiving admission to the Grammy's version of summer camp.

"It adds credibility to the school's music program that extends beyond a local scope," Sears said. "It gives recognition from an organization that has worldwide recognition."

Sears emphasized that other music programs that maybe aren't as far along, but are doing well, can apply for the Grammy Foundation's Enterprise Award, which is based on need as its primary focus.

"The benefits have been far-reaching," Swick said. "Far more than I anticipated."

The application process begins at www.grammyintheschools.com, and there, students and teachers can find out about other educational programs, information about careers in music and the Grammy camp for high school students.

"I encourage all public schools and private schools alike to expand their thinking beyond their schools," Sears said.

Contact View education reporter Laura Emerson at lcarroll@viewnews.com or 380-4588.

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