Dickinson launched its music-outreach program last September with a performance by the faculty wind quintet at Carlisle High School. “We’re very mobile as music ensembles,” said Blanka Bednarz. “We’re able to go to the schools and fit their schedules.”

“What the department’s been working on for a long time has been trying to find stronger connections with the community,” said Robert Pound, associate professor and chair of music. “With the outreach program, the circumstances have come to be right. We have 30 [tenured and adjunct] faculty members who are all actively engaged in performing on campus and in the area.”

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Aubrey Holmes ’11, a music major, is part of the Dickinson string quartet that performed in October. He saw the program as an opportunity not only to perform for a different audience but also to provide a community service and to learn teaching skills. He and fellow string-quartet member Brayden Downing ’13 will expand their community service this fall by offering violin coaching to area elementary-school students.

Blanka Bednarz, associate professor of music and the program coordinator, schedules performances at several schools to ensure wide access. “One of our premises with the music-outreach program was to reach not only students already involved in music but to reach those who do not currently play instruments,” she said. “In these settings, the performers welcome all kinds of questions,” she continued. “They’re often of a personal nature, such as ‘How long have you been playing?’ These are the sorts of things students wonder about and never have a chance to ask in a formal situation.”

During an April concert at Carlisle Area High School, each member of the Dickinson faculty jazz quartet explained his instrument’s role in the quartet—from the bass’s walking bass line to the piano setting the harmonic structure for the song—and fielded questions from a rapt audience. Students were stunned to learn that although the quartet had been together only three years, the musicians collectively had close to a century’s worth of experience.

“This is very enlightening for the kids,” said Dave Rohrer, the school district’s music director. “It’s a great opportunity for them to hear something they wouldn’t ordinarily hear—and in an intimate setting. The kids are just blown away.”