

## *The Daily Progress*

Charlottesville, VA

Free concert is right up  
your Kid Pan Alley

By Mary Alice Blackwell

Kids can say the darnedest things. Senior citizens can have the darnedest experiences.

Put them together ... and you are bound to come up with one darned good show.

Maybe even two.

"It is so cool," said Terri Allard, herself one darned good musician.

But aside from fronting her own band, Allard has been working on another project with yet another darned good performer.

Paul Reisler, who has recorded more than 40 albums, founded Kid Pan Alley, a program that teaches children to write songs. Reisler and Allard have been at Brownsville Elementary school this past week with one of a dozen residencies that they will be conducting in local schools.

This latest project will culminate with a concert for the community at 7 tonight, but there is something about his

program that sets it apart from all the others that Kid Pan Alley has staged over the years. This show will feature singer-songwriters who range in age from 10 to 100.

"This intergenerational residency was Paul Reisler and Gordon Walker's idea," Allard said. "They are both the ideas men."

Reisler is known for working with children. The founding member of the adult-oriented Trapezoid has taken his children's programs to some 20,000 elementary schools across the United States. Walker is well-known locally with his work for the Jefferson Area Board for the Aging.

"They just put their heads together," Allard said. "Gordon's grandchildren are here at [Brownsville]. When we were here last year, they started talking about the possibility of getting the seniors involved."

And so they did. Residents from Morningside Senior Living worked with second- and fifth-grade students at Brownsville.

"The seniors came and



we split the fifth-grade class in half," Allard said. "So about five or six seniors came to each class."

The seniors told who they were and what they had done in their past. Then they had questions for the children.

"They just talked for 45 minutes about what it was like to grow up 80, 90 years ago in this community," Allard said. "The children were enthralled. They were so interested. The only complaint, and I am not lying, was that it wasn't long enough."

One of the participants will be 101 in November.

"He was funny and charming," Allard said. "He loved it. He had a great time entertaining the kids.

"He was helpful and

informative, but he also had fun making the kids laugh."

After the visit, the children sat down and began the songwriting process, basing the lyrics on what they had learned from the senior citizens.

"It is everything we have hoped for and then some," Allard said.

But turnabout was fair play.

"In the afternoon, a group of eight second-graders went to Mountainside and talked to the seniors about what it's like to be their age now," Allard said. "When the kids left, the seniors started their song. They wrote a song based on what the children told them."

Both groups will be at Brownsville today to perform at an assembly for the school in the

afternoon and for the concert tonight.

Reisler will provide the musical accompaniment.

"The only instrument on stage is really going to be Paul's guitar," Allard said. "We might have our music teacher here join in. Mary Gordon Hall is here as a teacher.

Anytime we can get other people involved, we do."

But this darned show is all about the words.

"The singers do not play instruments, because we want them to focus on their lyrics," Allard said. "We want people to hear their lyrics.

"To be honest with you, you only have five days to write ten songs. If you had another five days, maybe you could add the instruments, but let's not put that idea in Paul's head," she added with a laugh.

The free show will be held in the school's auditorium.

"This has been fantastic," Allard said. "I have a feeling it won't be the last one.

"It was just a great experience for everyone."