

The Magazine of the Mizzou Alumni Association

# MIZZOU

## Changing Key

Piano man returns to school to teach.

*Story by Marcus Wilkins*

*Published May 21, 2014*

**W**hen tuning a piano, Sean Hennessy estimates he strikes the keys 1,000 times or more with his left hand in a one-and-a-half hour sitting. It is partly a labor of love — his family owned a Columbia music store for more than 35 years, so it's in his blood. But the repetitive motion and awkward body positions took their toll, so Hennessy, BA '93, returned to school for his teaching certificate.



Sean Hennessy tunes pianos, performs live music and teaches elementary school students. Photo courtesy of MU College of Education.

“If you tune two or three pianos a day, you’re hitting the keys six or seven thousand times,” Hennessy says. “Try doing that for 10 years.”

Now he teaches music to third- and fourth-graders at

Southern Boone Elementary, in part because of the Carl and Helen Kappler Scholarship, the largest offered by the College of Education. The scholarship relieved the financial pressure of attending Mizzou, which facilitated his education and will soon help his musically inclined 18-year-old daughter, Nora.

“Because I didn’t incur substantial debt, now I have the resources to help my daughter through college,” Hennessy says. “In a way, the Kapplers are sending two generations of my family through school.”

Nora, a singer and an actress, is weighing her collegiate options. Her father, in addition to teaching, plays guitar in various blues and jazz bands around town at venues including Mojo’s and Murry’s. Hennessy still visits local community centers and churches to tune the occasional piano, but now teaching provides most of his income.

**Topics:** Alumni, Web Exclusives

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Published by MIZZOU magazine, 109 Reynolds Alumni Center, Columbia, MO 65211 | Phone: 573-882-5916 | Email: [mizzou@missouri.edu](mailto:mizzou@missouri.edu)

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