

LA RABIDA CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL LAWN FETE 2010

During Lawn Fete 2010, classical musical trio, SugarStrings, will perform for guests gathered lakeside for the hospital's annual fundraiser.

A Musical Treat

When this sweet trio plays its stringed instruments, the music is as pleasing to the palate as it is to the ear.

"Lucinda Ali at the Hyde Park Suzuki Institute said 'When they play it's like sugar vibrating on the string,' " recalled Donna Williams, mother and aunt to three first cousins who form the classical group SugarStrings.

Adé (13, violin), Mira (12, viola/violin), and Ayanna (18, cello) will delight guests attending Lawn Fete 2010 a summer fundraiser at La Rabida Children's Hospital.

Performing together for six years, the accomplished trio shares the hospital's goal of helping children who are underserved. While the hospital provides programs and services to promote healthier bodies, SugarStrings offers art and passion to nurture the spirit.

"The girls are role models and an inspiration to our children and their families," said La Rabida's Vice President of Development Michael Cleavenger, who had seen the girls during a Christmas performance hosted by the South Side Friends of the Chicago Sinfonietta.

SugarStrings meets its mission of bringing classical music to underprivileged children and young people by stringing a sassy twist or jazz beat into traditional arrangements. "You may never have heard Michael Jackson's *Human Nature* performed on classical instruments," said Donna Williams, co-manger of the group. "Kids love the contemporary tunes because they can relate. It's sometimes hard to relate to Bach."

Williams's sisters Janice and Laura also coach and market the girls who started out entertaining grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins at family gatherings. Today, the girls enchant audiences across Chicago at community and charity events such as the United Negro College Fund's Black and White Ball. They have also performed family concerts for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the Ravinia Festival and the Chicago Chamber Musicians.

La Rabida is one of dozens of venues to be played this year by the elegant trio with skin tones of assorted chocolates and enviable curly locks. Two years ago, SugarStrings was featured on the pages of *Ebony* magazine.

Their performance at the Macy's Flower Show this year was covered by *NBC5*. The piece caught the eye of a producer from *NBC Nightly News* with Brian Williams.

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“At first, I was struck by the rarity of three young African American girls playing in a string trio,” said the producer who plans to feature SugarStrings in a future *Making a Difference* segment. “And I was further impressed with the girls' commitment to introducing other young

people to classical music and to supporting organizations that either support children or provide for the disadvantaged.”

Making a difference is exactly what the girls hope to do, said Donna Williams, a freelance writer and editor whose daughter and nieces share her South Side-bred values of hard work and giving back to the community.

“They are devoted to this,” she said. “There’s something about when children perform for other children, they really get it. It’s very inspiring.”