

THE Marion Star

By JOHN JARVIS • The Marion Star • June 1, 2008

Harding grad opens own School of Rock

MARION - Installing a window in the building he's converted to a music school as he spoke about his life as a professional drummer, Jason Gittinger didn't miss a beat.

"I have never known anything but (playing the drums)," said the 1995 Harding High School graduate whose parents Del and Nadine were professional musicians. "I remember being 3 years old and playing at Kiwanis Pancake Day. I was playing the drums in a blue sequin vest. I wasn't any good at all."

His mother, Nadine, remembered the episode differently, although laughing she noted he was wearing the blue sequin vest. "We started Jason on drums when he was 2. He really could actually play."

Gittinger's goal now is to pass along the knowledge he's gained in school, in life and in the studio to students at The Detroit School of Rock and Pop Music, which he opened March 31 in downtown Royal Oak, Mich., located in metropolitan Detroit.

"My goal for this place has nothing to do with music," said the married father of one whose full-time job is playing drums for a popular Detroit band called The Mega 80's. "It has everything to do with focusing a young person on details." For an individual pursuing musicianship, one of those details should be his school, he said. "If music is their passion, then this is where they should be."

He describes the school as "private music lessons on steroids." Students receive instruction in one room, while the other side of the building houses a recording studio and rehearsal facility. "... We make people play in bands."

Approximately eight years ago, Gittinger taught students at the Calumet Center for Juvenile Justice, an experience that contributed to his desire to open The Detroit School of Rock and Pop Music.

"I was teaching kids that had murdered and raped, unspeakable things," he said. He hopes his school can provide a positive path for young people to take, a way to overcome what may have been a less-than-desirable upbringing. "If I can make a difference by creating a music place and I can take care of that kid before he's 27 with a drug addiction, I would love to be that guy."