

West Bend Mutual sponsoring holiday performance in the city

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WEST BEND — West Bend Mutual Insurance is sponsoring the 48th annual Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra concert on Dec. 17 in West Bend, and this year, attendees will get a small treat after the show.

West Bend Mutual CEO Kevin Steiner said his company is happy to be part of this continued success story, bringing people together around the holidays and providing scholarships for deserving students.

"The world we live in today has a lot of things happening that are concerning to all of us, especially when you start talking about the safety and well-being of students — when you read and see all the things happening in our schools, it's concerning to everyone," Steiner said. "So to be able to hold a concert like this, a very upbeat night, a great community event, we need more of this; to be able to continue to do things like this, bringing the community together for a great cause and having a very enjoyable evening is special, so we're proud to be part of it."

All ticket proceeds go to Columns for student scholarships. This May, \$775,000 in scholarships was awarded to 182 students, of which \$325,000 came from Columns.

"If we want to have a strong school system here, certainly the idea and thought of all these scholarship dollars plays an important role," he said, "so we'll continue to do what we need to for Columns and their scholarship program."

Each year, Columns asks for a sponsor to underwrite the cost of bringing the orchestra. West Bend Mutual has sponsored the event several times, the last in 2010. That year, ticket sales were about \$14,000 and now Steiner said his expectation is to bring in more than \$25,000 to continue to grow the program. His long-term goal is to increase sales to \$30,000 and continue from there.

This is West Bend Mutual's 125 year in business, and Steiner said as part of their thanks to the community, it makes sense to sponsor such a special and historic local event. The company has been intertwined with the progression of the city and the high schools. West Bend Mutual helped with a largescale auditorium renovation that created the Silver Lining Performing Arts Center.

"It also certainly made the orchestra happy because it's an even better venue to play in; better sound, acoustics and a better place to hold a concert," Steiner said. He has been with the company for 25 years and seen West Bend Mutual expand to more than 1,300 employees with about 900 in West Bend.

"We believe in corporate social responsibility and believe we need to take a lead role in the key initiatives and key traditions that exist in our community," he said. "It's a blend of continuing with traditions we've had for years that distinguish us and at the same time, how do we participate with what's new?"



