
Sharing resources

By Lauri Cox Gifford

Aubrey High School has the fourth-best band in Texas among the 198 schools its size that have music programs, and North Texas State University is largely responsible.

The band won fourth place last spring in the Texas Music Educators Association Honor Band competition, which uses University Interscholastic League (UIL) judging standards. UIL is the statewide organization that coordinates public-school competition of all kinds; band directors consider it the toughest league.

Last year was also the third year the Aubrey band program acted as the lab school for NTSU's Music Learning Center, an experimental music instructional program.

"Had it not been for North Texas (center), I don't think that this band program, in three years' time, would have gone from nothing to fourth-best in the state of Texas," said Rick Badgett, 27, who just began his second year as Aubrey's band director. The school's band program started in 1978, he said.

Dr. Roger Warner, associate professor of instrumental music education at NTSU, is the university coordinator of the center. Warner believes that expert instruction from NTSU faculty and students involved in the center is the key to Aubrey's success.

The center, which Warner proposed in July 1980 and started that fall, has two purposes, he said. One is to provide quality band instruction for Aubrey students. A doctoral teaching fellow, an NTSU music education faculty member (Warner) and undergraduate music education majors provide this instruction. The second purpose is to provide a research center for NTSU's department of music education.

Warner said the research center provides an opportunity for music education majors to get teaching experience before they go into student teaching. The center also provides the NTSU music faculty with an opportunity to conduct graduate research in teaching methods.

North Texas named Clifford Whitelegg as the teaching fellow in 1980, Warner said. Whitelegg taught the high school band and the fourth-grade pre-instrumental group. Warner taught the beginning and middle school bands in addition to his NTSU classes.

"Then," Warner said, "the program started to grow to such a size that we couldn't handle it any more as part-time teachers. It needed a person full time to shepherd the program." So Aubrey hired Badgett in 1982 as its full-time band director, with Warner still teaching the beginning band.

Warner said the beginning band is now a part of his Teaching of Music at the Elementary Level course (MUSI 3311), which precedes student teaching. Each 3311 student has a 12-hour teaching-observation requirement.

A key point of the 3-year-old center, Warner said, is the success of the Aubrey band program. Last year, the high school band made top ratings in three of the four types of UIL competition. Last year was Aubrey's first year in UIL competition, and 22 of the band's 41 musicians were first-year members.

Badgett said the NTSU center at Aubrey has "definitely been an asset to our band program. There's no question about it."

The NTSU-Aubrey center is still growing, Warner said. This year, Warner and Dr. William May, assistant professor of choral music education at NTSU, received a faculty-research grant to start another project at Aubrey. The Parental Involvement in Children's Music Learning project, Warner said, is to discover how parents can participate in music instruction. Parents will learn an instrument along with their beginning-band children so they can help and support the child at home.

Also beginning this year, at Pilot Point and Whitesboro, is a master-class project, a spin-off of the Aubrey center. Graduate and upper-level undergraduate music education majors go a full day once a week to work with students in the district who play the same instrument the NTSU student is an expert on. The school districts pay the NTSU students \$80 per day plus travel expenses, he said.

As for the Aubrey high school band's future, Badgett said he has about 70 students in concert band this year. A 16-member stage band also will be formed. And 82 marching-band uniforms arrived in time to be worn, for the first time, at Aubrey's Homecoming last September.

Warner said, "We have 'arrived,' in a sense, with fourth place in the state. But beyond that competition and the winning, the (band) program itself has to have substance. Ultimately, what we're after in music education is for kids to love music for what it's all about."

Warner added, "Anything we can do to share resources and to find something that's mutually beneficial to both the university and the community is a great kind of endeavor."



A marching band drummer is shown the correct way to play his part by Mike Medina. Medina worked with the Music Learning Center at NTSU. (Photo by Lauri Cox Gifford)