

# Herndon Concert Bands Achieve Honor Band Status Three Years Running

Written by Sally Toner

By JENNIFER LOUDENSLAGER (Open Post)

April 4, 2015 | P

Share



0 Comments



The Herndon High School Symphonic and Wind Ensembles continued their tradition of excellence at the Virginia State Assessment evaluation on March 20 and 21, with the Wind Ensemble garnering an overall superior rating and Symphonic receiving an excellent rating.

The Wind Ensemble's superior rating at the assessment, which was held at Washington and Lee High School, gives Herndon High School Honor Band status for a third consecutive year. Honor Band status is awarded to schools whose marching band and wind ensembles achieve an overall superior rating at the VBODA assessment and Virginia State Assessment respectively.

Senior Christine Horting, first chair trumpet, explained the talent of individuals, work ethic, and contributions to the ensemble as a whole that have led to the band's success.

"We were able to get honor band for the past three years through a combination of talent and hard work. We have quite a bit of raw talent to begin with, then we practice to finesse our abilities...We understand that music is about the ensemble, not the player," Horting said.

First chair saxophone, senior Laura Mister echoed the spirit of family that encompasses the ensembles.

"We are all just one big group of friends that love each other," Mister said.

As part of the assessment, the bands played three pieces each ranked in difficulty from I to VI. Symphonic Band played Grade IV pieces, and the Wind Ensemble played Grade VI pieces. As director Kathleen Jacoby was out on maternity leave, interim director Stacey Kropaczek took over, preparing both bands for the competition.

“The harder the music level, the more each individual musician is responsible for—more notes, more crazy rhythms, and more independence from other instruments. Conducting gets more difficult too. I only have two arms, but there are usually about five or six different things happening in the music at one time,” Kropaczek said.

As a long-term substitute, Kropaczek praised the work on the part of the students and the support from the community.

“I’m going to miss coming to Herndon everyday, and I will definitely miss the kids. I can only hope other schools are filled with such entertaining, helpful, driven people.”

For state assessment, bands perform a prepared program for three judges who grade in seven categories in areas such as intonation, rhythm, and balance. Bands then have seven minutes to scan a piece for sight reading they perform for the same judges.

But it is the students who take away much more from the experience than competition and a score, as the Pride’s seniors reflected on their experiences over the past four years.

“When I go to college, I will be bringing my confidence and leadership skills that the Pride of Herndon has taught me,” said Mister.

Horting echoed this sentiment, and reiterated the gratitude she feels over the love of music she has nurtured through her band experience.

“I will always remember that music is for enjoyment. It is imperative that you love every note...I will always remember how our band would become one force of sound on the stage, feeding off each other’s energies. It doesn’t matter what you do with music after high school. It just matters that you find peace in music.”

