



1991-2004

ASSOCIATION OF TEXAS SMALL SCHOOL BANDS
Celebrating 13 years of service to small school bands in Texas
4229-4 Purdue Street Houston, Texas 77005 (713) 666-8869

ATSSB NEWSLETTER

Volume XIII, Number 3

December, 2003 (updated 12-24-03)

ATSSB Executive Committee

Ed Lowes, President 2003-05

LaGrange High School
P.O. Box 100
LaGrange, Texas 78945
(979) 968-4843
email: pres@atssb.org

Steven Moore, President-Elect 2003-05

Lindale High School
P.O. Box 370
Lindale, Texas 75771
(903) 882-9801
email: preselect@atssb.org

Gary Robbins, Immediate Past-President

Rusk High School
203 E. 7th
Rusk, Texas 75785
(903) 683-5533
email: ppres@atssb.org

Kenneth L. Griffin, Executive Secretary

Association of Texas Small School Bands
4229-4 Purdue Street
Houston, Texas 77005
(713) 666-8869 (voice & fax)
email: execsec@atssb.org

Sherry Poteet, Class C/CC Representative 2003-05

Gilmer Junior High School
P.O. Box 40
Gilmer, Texas 75644
(903) 843-3051
email: msrep@atssb.org

Randy Hunsaker, Class A Representative 2002-04

Stratford High School
P.O. Box 108
Stratford, Texas 79084
(806) 366-3339
email: arep@atssb.org

Carl Idlebird, Class AA Representative 2003-05

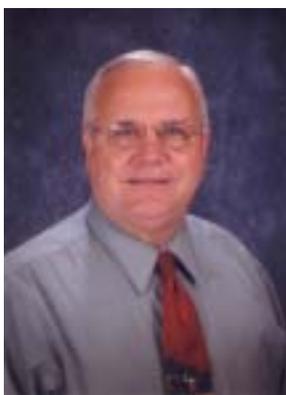
Somerville High School
523 Eighth Street
Somerville, Texas 77879
(979) 596-1534
email: aarep@atssb.org

Rob Toups, Class AAA Representative 2002-04

Canton High School
1100 West Hwy 243
Canton, Texas 75103
(903) 567-6561
email: aaarep@atssb.org

President's Column

by Ed Lowes



Congratulations to the 2004 ATSSB All-State Jazz Ensemble. We now have twenty more students that will be performing at our all-state event this February (<http://www.atssb.org/execsec/State.Jazz.04.pdf>). We are indeed proud to see our association grow more with another exciting avenue for our students in small-school band programs to excel. Thanks to Brandon Brewer and all of our region coordinators that made this

process work. We even had new jazz ensembles perform at local region clinic/concerts across the state. We continue to have a great group of band directors in the small schools of Texas. Many are working very hard to make your association the very best that it can be. **To make your convention work smoother for you, we decided to move our all-state jazz ensemble rehearsals to the First Presbyterian Church across from the Scottish Rite Auditorium.** It has a much bigger room for our group to rehearse than what was offered at the convention site and makes it easier for our directors to listen to all three groups. **However we will still hold our ATSSB General Session at the convention center in San Antonio.** Check the ATSSB website for the latest updates.

We have much to be thankful for at this time of year. Across the state many of you have finished your marching season and have performed special patriotic concerts both in and around your communities. However, a few of you are still going at it weekly with new music and marching drills at football playoff games. This is your chance to show off your musical group skills as your

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(President's Column, continued from Page 1):

band performs to thousands of fans across the state (<http://www.uil.utexas.edu/ath/fbpair/index.html>). Planning a game trip while working on special holiday music takes up much of your time. Here is a hint. Have the restaurant's phone number in your cell phone while you are traveling in your bus. Call the restaurant a few minutes before you arrive and give them an adjusted total number of students and adults that you will feed. Bring along a school check. On another note, don't forget to spend some extra time with your students working towards the ATSSB region and area competitions. It is truly an exciting time to see your students shine as they enter the ATSSB all-state band process. To make your region run smoother, make sure **everyone** is on the correct year **C** and etude cut. Don't trust the tape or CD that you just purchased to have the correct cut of the audition. Remember to read your local region rules and procedures prior to entering any competition (<http://www.atssb.org/execsec/Year.C.Update.pdf>). Listen to your students. **It would be helpful if every region would place their region rules up on their local ATSSB region web site. Check your music twice or even three times with your students before you go to the competition.** Give your students this link (<http://www.atssb.org/auditions.asp>) to review prior to the competition. **I would also like to see you list your clinicians and musical selections performed up on the various ATSSB websites. This will help the association's clinician handbook to be completed for our membership this summer.** Send this information to me (pres@atssb.org).

Have you looked at the new PML on CD (<http://www.uil.utexas.edu/mus/pmlinfo.html>)? It is a big list to study and allows us to all learn new material. There have been many discussions on the various chat boards both pro & con about the new PML. Plan ahead and learn how to use the CD to see if your favorite selections are on or off of the list.

This past summer we noticed that we had over a million total hits to our ATSSB web site. This included nearly one thousand downloads of The Star Spangled Banner followed by Amazing Grace. This means that 54 separate countries had connected to our site. Thanks Tim Edins, our ATSSB Webmaster, for your help in getting the word out about ATSSB around the world.

An ATSSB brochure is being developed by a committee led by Aaron Lewis. Committee members are working on this project on weekends. We should have this project completed for our association this summer.

Our OPS competition has grown with an average of 41 new CD's each year for the past six years. We peaked in 2003 with 445 entrees for this competition. I am proud of our local region having the largest growth from the past year. And on the subject of scholarships, I hear of a region bringing in more scholarship funds this year. We need these donations for our seniors in our all-state bands. **Don't forget to donate \$\$.**

I know that most school districts will allow you to attend the ATSSB concerts if you are more involved with your band students and the ATSSB association. This year is going to be a very special event with three all-state performing groups. Don't forget that your All-State Housing Forms are due by January 16, 2004 for your all-state students. The cost is \$125 dollars per student. Just a note, our hotel rates are **more affordable** for our association membership.

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(President's Column, continued from Page 2):

Have you taken the time to jump in and get involved at your local level? Work on your region rules and decide your voting issues. Follow the procedures to the letter and your students will benefit from your hard work. I can not tell you how much we appreciate the work across the state from directors getting involved with their students and their local regions. Remember that we are here to help you and your students have a superior all-state band experience. **GET INVOLVED!**

ALL STATE BAND AREA: Saturday, January 10, 2004

ALL-STATE CLINIC: February 11-14, 2004 in San Antonio, Texas

CLINICIANS: Shelly Berg (University of Southern California), Jazz Ensemble; Jim Keene (University of Illinois), Symphonic Band; Kevin Sedatole (Baylor University), Concert Band; ATSSB has commissioned Elliot Del Borgo to write a Grade 2+ piece for the Concert Band entitled FORTRESS VARIANTS

ALL-STATE CONCERT: Saturday, ♥ February 14, 2004 ♥ at 11:00 a.m. in the Scottish Rite Auditorium

Sincerely, 

President Elect's Column

by Steven Moore

Let me begin by saying “Happy Holidays” to you and your students. We are entering my favorite time of the year. The spirit and goodwill that abound during this time of the year really gets me going. Be sure to take some time and enjoy the holiday season with your band students and share the Christmas Spirit with your school and community. Give a Christmas Concert or take small groups to play Christmas carols at your elementary schools or nursing homes or community centers. I am going to be taking my band to all of the elementary schools and the junior high in my district and give a Christmas Concert. Everyone I talk to is excited about it. Not only is this good for the school and community, but it is a great recruiting and public relations opportunity.



I have tentatively scheduled the Stephen F. Austin State University Stone Fort Woodwind Quintet to perform the opening concert on Wednesday, February 11th. The concert will begin at 6:00 pm so please have your all-state students at the Scottish Rite Auditorium by 6:00 to enjoy this outstanding group.

The SARC Committee will meet at 7:00 pm in the Library of the Emily Morgan Hotel on Wednesday February 11, 2004. I will get the agenda to you before the convention so that you are prepared for the meeting. One of the main issues on the agenda will be the 1A / 2A All State Band proposal that was tabled during the July meeting so that we could gather more data. I am in the process of gathering the necessary data and will have it ready by convention for discussion. To the general membership, if you have any questions, comments or suggestions regarding the audition process, remember to email or send them to me before the convention so that I can put them on the agenda. As always, any of your comments and suggestions are welcome.

(President-Elect's Column, continued from Page 2):

Good luck to all involved in the audition process and let me say thank you in advance to all of our ATSSB Coordinators and workers for your support and dedication to ATSSB. Without your hard work and sacrifice, ATSSB would not be the success that it is. Have a great Christmas, and I will see you in San Antonio in February.

Steven Moore

Executive Secretary's Column

by Kenneth L. Griffin



I hope the ATSSB audition process went well for all of you at the region level and that you are looking forward to Area January 10. Be sure when you go to Area that all forms are properly signed (**and notarized**) and completed, that you make hotel reservations for your students that make the All-State Band, and that you make housing plans yourself.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank **Randy Hunsaker** and **Rob Toups** for their service to ATSSB for the last two years as Class A and AAA Representatives to the ATSSB State Board of Directors. It is a time-consuming but necessary role that they played on the Executive Committee as it has tried to accommodate the needs of students and their directors.

Please make an effort not only to thank our **Licensees** for their support, but also to use their services. These companies have paid a fee and are under contract to use the ATSSB logo and marks on their products. They pay a portion of their receipts to the ATSSB All-State Band Scholarship. Please consider using them before any other companies offering the same or similar products: Southwest Specialties (Paul Proctor - Midlothian) = T-shirts, caps, plaques, etc.; Probst Audio (Scott Probst - Ennis) = audio recordings of concerts on CD; Concertronics (William Collins - Victoria) = recording of concerts on tape or CD; Jordan Sound Productions (Gary Jordan - Bullard) = recording of concerts on tapes or CD and ATSSB Area etude performance tapes; Made To Order (Larry Wood - Lorenzo) = T-shirts, caps, plaques, etc.; California T's (L. Steve Taylor - Lubbock) = T-shirts, caps, plaques, etc.; and On Site Digital (Randy Bryant - Austin) - recording of concerts on tapes or CD.

A reminder about **piccolo** and **E \flat clarinet**: If your flute or clarinet player makes the All-State Band at the Area auditions January 10 and would like to play piccolo (flutes) or E \flat Soprano Clarinet (clarinets), have them bring these instruments to San Antonio. After regular chair auditions are completed for flute/clarinet, we will hold separate auditions for these two instruments for each band from among those students interested in it that were selected for their respective bands. One piccolo and one soprano clarinet may be selected from among the Symphonic flutes and clarinets; also, one piccolo and one soprano clarinet may be selected from among the Concert flutes and clarinets. If no one auditions on these instruments from one, either, or both bands, then the instrument will not be used. A notice concerning this policy will be placed in the flute and clarinet packets they will receive at Area this year if they are selected for the All-State Band.

We will continue our **hotel reservation** practice. Each student that wishes to stay in ATSSB housing must pay a \$125 housing fee directly to ATSSB (the address will be on the housing form they complete at Area). ATSSB will then pay one check for the hotel rooms up front. If directors are able to

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(Executive Secretary's Column, continued from Page 4):

reserve a room using ATSSB housing forms, they must pay for the room in one check directly to ATSSB in the amount of \$375 (split any way you can among directors sharing the room with you). Make sure you include the student name and school (or director's name and school). Remember to take care of this before January 16, 2004, or you will lose your reservation.

We plan to hold our ATSSB **Business Session** in CC1 of the Convention Center at 12:30 p.m. on Thursday, February 12. **Elections** for Class A and Class AAA Representatives to the State Board of Directors will be held at this meeting. I hope you can make plans to attend during the busy activities in San Antonio. Remember that proxies are not allowed in these elections. A short biographical sketch of each candidate for state office can be found in this Newsletter (if a biography was submitted).

When you get a chance, be sure to thank our **Region and Area Coordinators** for their efforts in securing audition sites, hosts, audition chairmen, computer equipment and logistics, etc. Also, let's not forget to thank our **State Chair Audition Coordinator** (Bing Bingham of Wimberley) and all of his helpers and judging panels in advance of the work facing them as the two bands are seated; also Stephen Henry from Industrial High School in Vanderbilt is serving as **State Chair Auditions Office Manager** this year. Our All-State **Symphonic Band Organizer** (Cindy Mikel of Argyle), All-State **Symphonic Band Percussion Organizer** (Cathie Cain of Garrison), All-State **Concert Band Organizer** (William Foster of Caldwell), All-State **Concert Band Percussion Organizer** (Bobby Fife of Kountze), and All-State **Jazz Ensemble Organizer** (Brandon Brewer of Princeton) still have a job ahead of them. The convention-clinic and concerts will take a LOT of preparation, advanced planning and organization. Rooms have been booked for you and your students, the Scottish Rite Auditorium has been reserved and liability insurance purchased for the time we will occupy it. Arrangements for police security in the auditorium have been made, stands and percussion equipment have to be provided before chair auditions begin on Wednesday night, programs have to be completed, badges for the students have to be made and personalized, entertainment for All-State students prior to the general meeting arranged - - not to mention many other activities taking place in the background as we prepare for the clinic. All of the people involved give so much of their time to make it a success. It would not be possible if it weren't for their dedication to the profession and the students in the All-State Bands who benefit from their efforts.

Since this will be our last communication before San Antonio, let me address those of you who will have students in the All-State Band for the first time. Please remember that many are in the "big city" for the first time. They will need **frequent contact** with you to allay their fears and keep them focused on their role as they represent not only ATSSB, but also their bands, school, and community. **Drop by rehearsals often**, especially at breaks, to see that they have a place to go and that they know what they may do in their free time. It also helps to have directors observing rehearsals at all times. Not only do we learn good rehearsal techniques from our fine clinicians, but also we can act as a restraining presence to students who might otherwise allow their attention to drift during rehearsals. There is certainly nothing wrong with leaning over a student with a cap on and quietly asking him or her to remove it -- or watching a section and noticing a student talking in a distracting manner and quietly asking them to stop. Our Organizers are with the band almost constantly, but we cannot expect them to be there every minute nor expect them to see every infraction of rehearsal protocol. Try to drop by and give a listen -- and a hand.

Our **corporate supporters** are so consistent in their desire to help provide shoulder patches, programs, and "breakout" refreshments for the all-state students. They will be recognized in the all-state programs, but I just wanted to say an additional "Thank You" to them in advance for their contributions

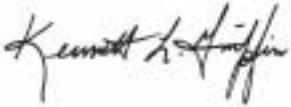
(Continued on Page 6)

(Executive Secretary's Column, continued from Page 5):

to the continued success of the ATSSB All-State Band.

Be sure to visit with your Region Coordinators about issues you wish addressed at the State Board meeting coming up. One item concerns the ATSSB **Website Chatboard** and whether it should be restricted to ATSSB members only. This is being addressed for the second year in a row. Make your opinions about this issue and others confronting ATSSB known to your representatives to the State Board so they can be discussed with a consensus from the membership.

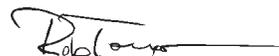
Thank all of you for your continued diligence and hard work on behalf of the students in our small school programs. Keep up the great work.



Class AAA Representative Column by Rob Toups

On behalf of the Executive Board of the Association of Texas Small School Bands, I wish all of our members a happy and blessed Holiday Season. Once again, a very exciting fall marching season has come to a close, with the exception of a few of our "luckiest" who continue to perform christmas concerts on the grid iron during playoff game halftimes (what fun this must be). As your AAA representative I wish to congratulate the many outstanding Bands and their Directors who have worked hard preparing creative marching band presentations this year. Regardless of the ratings, I am confident that each and every community was pleased and proud to see and hear our young student musicians march and play on Friday nights, at UIL evaluation, and various invitational contest events. Now, it is time to change gears and begin reading as much literature as possible to find those perfect works for UIL (concert/sightreading) and for spring concerts. There is so much joy in passing out a new piece of music and discovering what it has to offer an audience and the student performers.

On a personal note, I would like to express my appreciation to the AAA membership of ATSSB for giving me the chance to serve you for the last four years. As your AAA representative it is an honor not only to serve the greatest music educators in the world, but also to be a small part of the process by which we strive to serve the instrumental music students of our great State. ATSSB is such a remarkable asset for rural school band programs and directors. I am excited about having a new AAA representative to provide his or her talents to this process. A variety of ideas and leadership are essential to the well being of the Association, and by passing the torch to another we are going to get a fresh perspective concerning the affairs of AAA school music programs and the ATSSB as a whole. As active members of this great organization, we must all be committed and ready to serve when called upon, so that our young music students now and in the future benefit from our guidance and talents. I, for one, intend to remain ready to serve as needed so that our Texas School music programs continue to be regarded as the **BEST IN THE WORLD IN MUSIC EDUCATION !**



Outstanding Performance Series

by Don Thoede, State Chair

The 2003 Outstanding Performance Series State Winners compact disc will be available December 7, 2003. The two CD set contains the 2003 OPS winners and the 2003 ATSSB All-State Symphonic and Concert Bands and sells for \$15.00. You can find an order form below and on the ATSSB website. Please make these order forms available to your students.



I want to remind the OPS winners and runners-up that you will be presented with very prestigious awards at the ATSSB General Session in February at the Convention. If any of you cannot be present to accept your award, please contact me, preferably before the convention, and give me the name of the individual who will accept the award for you.

All directors should familiarize themselves with all of the entry procedures before the 2004 entry deadline, especially after the Convention. Most of the OPS changes, if any, are usually made at the ATSSB State Board of Directors meeting at the February convention, so be sure to check the ATSSB website often before you send in your 2004 entries.

As always, I am here to help you, so feel free to contact me at anytime.

I hope you have a great holiday season, and I am looking forward to seeing you in February.

Don Thoede

ATSSB Outstanding Performance Series CD Order Form

Please type or print your name and mailing address below. This may be your mailing label!



Put quantity of CD sets in the blanks of the year(s) you wish to order:

_____ 2003	_____ 2002	_____ 2001	_____ 2000	_____ 1999	_____ 1998	_____ 1997
_____ total number of CD sets ordered X \$15 per CD set =						\$ _____
Include \$2.50 shipping for one CD set						\$ 2.50
Add \$.50 per additional CD set shipped to same address _____ X \$.50						\$ _____

TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED -----> \$ _____

Mail this form with your check made out to "Avant Recordings" to:

Avant Recordings

P.O. Box 1513

Forney, Texas 75126

(972) 564-3287

avantrec@aol.com

ELECTION

Class A and Class AAA Representatives to the State Board of Directors for 2004-06 will be elected in the ATSSB General Session on Thursday, February 12, 2004 at 12:30 in Ballroom C1 of the Convention Center. Nominees who accepted their nomination and who submitted a biography and/or picture by publication follow below. All Active Members may vote only for the candidates for the class schools in which they are actively involved. Class AA does not vote on this ballot. Class C/CC Active Members may only vote for the Class A or AAA Representative if their school feeds that class high school.

Should nominees send biographies and/or pictures, they will be added as soon as possible and this Newsletter updated online.

Class A Representative

Rodney Bennett is the band director at Munday High School in Region 2.



Beth Morrison has been the Director of Music and Bands at Thrall High School in Region 18 since 1988. She and her husband of 15 years, James, have no children but enjoy their three whippets: Ashli, Amani, and Moose. She received

her B.M.Ed. from Southwestern University in 1988 where she studied piano with artist-in-residence Drusilla Huffmaster. She has been a member of ATSSB since 1992, is a member of TMEA, TBA, Delta Omicron Music Fraternity (life member), TCTA, and St. Philip's UMC in Round Rock where she is in the Chancel Choir, Praise Band performing lead vocals and keyboards, and is a soloist. The Thrall bands have won numerous awards over the past 16 years, including first divisions in Marching, Concert and Sightreading. The Tiger Band has participated in Disney Magic Music Days, Cavalcade of Music in Colorado Springs, and South Coast Music Festival and have been recognized in the ATSSB Outstanding Performance Series. "I am proud to be a part of ATSSB. This organization has done so much to support small school programs throughout Texas, and has created wonderful musical opportunities for our

students. It is my desire keep this going. I am excited about an opportunity to serve ATSSB in this capacity."

Scott Rhame is the band director at Carlisle High School in Region 21. He graduated from Jefferson High School in 1964 and attended Kilgore Junior College, studying with Wally Read, then attended



Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches where he received his BMEd. In 1975, he completed his master's degree from what is now the University of Texas at Tyler, studying with Dr. Kenneth Muckelroy. He began his teaching career while a senior in college with a half-day job at Mt. Enterprise. His first full-time job was at Carlisle beginning in 1969. He then taught in Overton, Henderson and West Rusk before returning to Carlisle where he has been for the past eleven years. His bands have been TMEA Honor Band finalists six times. His Carlisle bands have placed in the finals of the Outstanding Performance Series and are consistent winners in marching, concert, and sightreading contests. He is a member of ATSSB, TMEA, TMAA, and teaches percussion for the University of Texas at Tyler with summer camps at Stephen F. Austin. He and his wife Gloria were high school sweethearts and were married in 1967. They have three

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(Class Representative Nominees, continued from Page 8):

children: Steven is an outstanding percussionist who spent six and one-half years in the Marine Band in California and served in the Persian Gulf; Denise is an outstanding flautist and is now in Kingwood; and Christopher is an all-region trumpet player.

Class AAA Representative



Jim Jones is the Band Director at Carthage High School in Region 21. He is a graduate of Gilmer High School and received his bachelors and masters degree from Stephen F. Austin State University. He began his teaching career at Center and then

moved to Pittsburg where he served as Director of Bands for the next seven years. After one year in administration, he returned to music and moved to Cleveland where he served as Director of Bands for 13 years. He is currently Director of Bands in Carthage. His bands have received numerous Sweepstakes Awards and have been chosen outstanding in their class. He is an active clinician and adjudicator. His bands have performed at Disney World, Disneyland, the Nation's Capitol and at the White House. He was TMEA Region X Band chairman, National Association of Military Marching Bands president and on the State Nominating Committee for the Texas Bandmaster Association. He is a member of ATSSB, Phi Beta Mu International Band Fraternity, Texas Music Adjudicators Association, TMEA and president of the Stephen F. Austin Lumberjack Band Alumni Association. He is the University Interscholastic League Representative for

Region XXI and was the past 4A representative to the Region XXI Executive Committee. "It would be my honor and privilege to represent the 3A directors of the state. I feel that ATSSB is such a positive influence in each of our student's musical environment. We need to develop our positive attributes even further and set new goals in such a way that our organization stays on the forefront of our profession. If given the opportunity, I feel I could represent and help the 3A schools in a positive manner. I have spent a majority of my life in a 3A setting and would be honored to represent each of you at the state level."

Wayne King is the Band Director at Smithville High School in Region 18. Wayne is a native of Pascagoula, MS and has been married to Dianna, also a music educator, for seven years. They are proud new parents of their 6 month old son,



Charlie. Wayne is in his ninth year of teaching. He spent three years as an Assistant Band Director in the Austin Independent School District and six in Smithville. Wayne received his Bachelor of Music Education degree from the University of Mississippi in 1994 and his Master of Music Education from the University of Southern Mississippi in 1995. He served as a graduate assistant at USM with the concert and marching bands. As the head band director for Smithville ISD, Wayne has achieved numerous awards. His bands consistently achieve division one ratings in UIL Concert and Sightreading Contests. The Smithville Band received division one ratings in UIL Marching Contest for the past six years advancing to Area three of those

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years. Under his direction, the band earned their first ever Sweepstakes Award in 2001 followed by another Sweepstakes in 2003. The Smithville band advanced to the Area level in 1999 and 2003 in the Outstanding Performance Series. They also advanced to the Area level in the TMEA Honor Band competition in 2002. Wayne is a member of the Texas Music Educator's Association and the Association of Texas Small School Bands and soon to be member of the Texas Music Adjudicator's Association.



Derek Porter is the Band Director at Bridgeport High School in Region 2. He was raised in Antlers, Oklahoma, and graduated from East Central University in Ada, Oklahoma, in 1996. While in college, he studied with Harley

Thomas and Dr. Dennis Silkebakken. He taught in Elmore City and Purcell, Oklahoma, then moved to Bridgeport, Texas, where he was an assistant for one year before taking over as head director. His bands have received numerous awards in marching, concert and sightreading competitions. He and his wife of one year, Gina, are the proud parents of a beautiful new baby, Macy Marie.

John Young is band director and Music Supervisor in Wills Point, Texas at Wills Point High School in Region 3. He received his Instrumental Music Education Degree from the University of Arkansas in



Fayetteville, AR. He is receiving his Masters of School Administration from Texas A&M at Commerce in the spring of 2004. John is currently in his 7th year at Wills Point. Prior to this position, John spent six successful years at his alma mater, Parkway High School in Bossier City, LA. That band earned numerous first divisions in regional and state events.

When John arrived at Wills Point, the band program had 32 students in high school and 90 in junior high. The band currently has grown to nearly 150 in high school and almost 300 in the junior high. At the same time that this growth has occurred, so has the success of the band. John has guided the high school band to their first ever division I in concert band and 3 UIL Sweepstakes Awards. John and his staff of band directors are committed to music excellence in Wills Point and the state of Texas.

John and his wife Tracy have two daughters, Emily and Claire. He is a member of ATSSB, TMEA, TBA and TMAA. John also serves his community by being a member of Kiwanis and serving as director of Adult Handbell Choir at the First Baptist Church of Wills Point.

"I am honored to have been nominated by our Region for the AAA State Representative position. I have a strong desire to serve our association and facilitate its strength and stature within the state. ATSSB has provided many positive opportunities for my students and me, and has assisted in the continued growth of our program. If elected, I will do my very best to serve our organization to the best of my ability and give back to ATSSB as much as it has given me over the past years. We are a student-centered organization and one that continues to strive for improvement in all areas of service to our music community. I would be honored to have your support for the office of AAA Representative."

Is there A Need For A 6-man School Marching Contest?

by Robin Stephens

(Editor's Note: Robin Stephens is the Band Director at Water Valley High School, a class A school in Region 7. He has made numerous postings on the ATSSB Chatboard regarding this issue and I asked him to write an article explaining his position)

Greetings Fellow Music Educators. Having boldly started a discussion on the feasibility of possibly starting a 6-man football school Marching Contest, I now find myself in the unenviable position of feeling as if I've been caught in an avalanche -- with no skis, goggles, or even a jacket. The responses to my postings on the ATSSB Chat Board have been interesting, and very educational. It may be that this is the next major topic to be discussed at Region meetings, ATSSB/TMEA conferences, etc. I am attempting to break this down into two basic parts: The role of us as small school educators in TMEA/ATSSB and what our students need; and a totally subjective viewpoint of the 6-man Football school that has a band program. BE WARNED: I tend to ramble -- a LOT.

Having taught only in Texas for 6 years; I am a relative newcomer. I've taught in both New Mexico and Arizona before moving to the Great Nation of Texas. Of the three, I honestly feel that Texas is the best place both for the teacher AND the student. Standards are higher, and generally we expect more from our kiddos. Many other states do not place a high value on the smaller schools. I believe that here in Texas, we think ALL students are important; thus, the Association of Texas Small Schools Bands was created -- to better serve the needs of the small-town schools. As I understand it, ATSSB was formed because the small schools felt they needed a venue for their students to achieve a state level performance opportunity (and you don't know how many times I reworked the previous sentence). Let's face it, most of the larger schools (4A-5A) have a much greater access to educational resources than the smaller schools, especially those in extremely rural areas. In most cases, many 1A and 2A schools seldom even hang onto a Band Director for more than two or three years. Many of our colleagues have a desire to teach in the larger schools and actively work for advancement to those schools. I know, not all of us. But in all honesty, a great number do.

So, ATSSB was formed. The founding members have done an awesome job in developing the potential of the small schools, and we now have All-State Bands, from RURAL schools that are better than some states' regular All-State Bands. Rather than being considered an 'upstart group of malcontents' (Yes, I've heard that), we are now accepted by the majority of our colleagues statewide. We have aligned with TMEA and now can represent ourselves to our local school districts as unified organizations in the all-state audition process. Now, we are faced with another question: Is there something more we can do for the even smaller schools. Are we doing all we can to make sure that all our students have an equal opportunity to succeed? Are we committed to go that extra mile to help our students? Or, as many view us, are we just in it for the money, using our place at the small school as a stepping stone, and then be gone the following next year?

Currently, there are 103 schools that play 6-man football. That is most certainly not ALL the very small, rural schools. Many of those other than the 103 schools may not even HAVE a football program. Please understand, I am NOT tearing down the 6-man football program. Although this is my 1st year at the 6-man level, I am amazed at the student athletes I've seen. These kiddos work, and work HARD, for their success. But there are differences, MAJOR differences, in the game and the field. The differences in the game aren't important; the differences in the FIELD are.

An 11-man football field uses the following dimensions and markings:

Goal-line to goal-line is 100 yards.

Sideline to sideline is 53 yards (OK, if you want to get technical, it's 52 & 1/2 yards).

The hash marks are placed 20 yards from each sideline (NCAA markings).

Yard line numbers are placed so that the top of the number is 9 yards from the sideline.

This is all pretty cut and dried. Most of us have been using these for years. However, these are the 6-man dimensions and markings:

Goal-line to goal-line is 80 yards. There is no 50 yard line. The 40 marks the center of the field.

Sideline to sideline is 40 yards.

Hash marks are placed 40 feet from each sideline.

At this point, I have forgotten exactly how far the yard line numbers are from the sideline, but I'm almost certain it isn't 9 yards.

So, right away you can see that the marching band from the 6-man school is at a disadvantage. Most bands share their practice field with the football team. I don't know about you guys, but MY Head Football coach is not going to let me mark up his field with 11-man markings, especially the hash marks. To march on the practice field, the kiddos may have to get used to marching OUTSIDE the sidelines to form the sets required for the show. When the band goes to marching contest, all the explanations in the world won't make a difference during the intensity of the performance. If the kid is used to moving outside the yard line, then he/she is going to go outside the yard line. In talking to several of my colleagues, both in small

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schools and larger programs, I believe that we need to look at the possibility of creating a 6-man Marching Band division within the Class 1A division. The bands in this 6-man division would have the option of marching in the 6-man division, or in the regular 1A division. Only bands from schools that play 6-man football, according to the UIL Alignment, would be allowed to compete in this division. The standards of performance would be the same, but the band would be marching on field dimensions that they are used to on a daily basis.

Now, as to the 'Points to consider.' I've thought of several, but I know there are dozens I have missed. Among the ones I have thought of are:

1) Size of field. This is basically a no-brainer. Talking to coaches about moving from 11-man football to 6-man, the teams have a tougher time getting used to the field size. As mentioned earlier, there is a 40% reduction in the size of the field, with the most important being the width from side line to sideline. Most small schools stay within 15 yards of the 50/40 yard line (remember, in 6-man, there is no 50 yard line). Most small bands stay in front of the back hash, with a large part of their show going to the front sideline. This is a big problem. In 6-man football, the front sideline is 40 FEET from the front hash. In 11-man, it's 60 feet.

2) Where to hold the contest. Also, will there be area/state level contests? Presently, there are approximately 30 6-man schools with Band programs. Most of those schools are in Central and West Texas, but there are several in other parts of the state as well. In all honesty, the contest really should be held at a 6-man school that has the proper facilities. It would not be feasible to have a 6-man contest in every UIL Region. Therefore, we would need to look at combining regions for this contest, and moving up to the Area State Level.

3) Judges. I think it IMPERATIVE that judges for this contest have some experience at the small school level, preferably the 6-man level.

4) Do we hold this before UIL Marching Contest, or concurrent with it?

This proposed 6-man Marching contest is NOT intended to take away from ATSSB, TMEA, or UIL. It would be best served if this was a sanctioned event, under the auspices of UIL/TMEA/ATSSB. Possibly the ATSSB Region Coordinators could oversee it with help from the 6-man schools. In my region (Region 7), both my Principal and Athletic Director have already said that we would host such an event and that they would look forward to it. Plus, we have the facilities for it.

I know that there aren't many 6-man schools with band programs. Shoot, in my region alone, there are only two. Statewide, 103 schools currently play 6-man football. I haven't yet had the time to research the schools to see which ones have band programs. But, as you know, we realign next year. MANY schools are dropping down to 6-man football, among them are Throckmorton, Wheeler, and Crowell. I know that all three of those schools have band programs.

In closing, I am not here to make waves or cause trouble. I saw some discussion on this topic awhile back, and it seemed like a great idea. I would welcome any constructive discussion and look forward to talking with interested directors. What I AM asking is that we in the small schools and Class 1A look at our programs and ourselves. Are we doing what's best for our students? We all know directors who have a bit of an ego to feed, who think the students are there for THEM. My friends, nothing could be further from the truth. Many years ago, there was a movie out starring Nick Nolte, Ralph Machicco, and Richard Mulligan called "Teachers." Without going into a lot of detail, it concerned the life of teachers at a city school. The main character said something at the end of the movie that has always stuck with me. When threatened with losing his job, he said, "The kids aren't here for us; we're here for them." That is the way it should be. Are we doing the best? Are we looking at all opportunities? Do our students have equal chances to succeed? Whether or not they TRY isn't important. It's that they have the chance. I would like to thank Mr. Griffin for the time to present this to you, and thank all of you for your time. Good luck in concert season.

The ATSSB Newsletter is the official publication of the Association of Texas Small School Bands. Articles of interest to small school band directors will be published as space permits. Letters to the Editor from members will be published if signed, although writers may remain anonymous by request. Send all inquiries to: ATSSB; 15310 Amesbury Lane; Sugar Land, TX 77478-4180, fax them to (281) 494-2151, or email them to execsec@atssb.org with appropriate attachments.

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