



WHS All-State Choir selections represent long tradition

Towns are usually aware of high school sports playoffs or conference championship streaks, but one Woodstock High School Blue Streaks program has its own remarkable streak spanning three decades.

The WHS Choir program has sent singers to the Illinois Music Education Association's All-State Choir Team for 29 consecutive years. That streak began with legendary Choir Director Paul Rausch and current Director Brian Jozwiak takes great pride in continuing the tradition.

Jozwiak credited the Woodstock community as a place that supports the arts and District 200 for the enviable success of the WHS program.

"It's the quality of the feeder schools and the music teachers and the skills that they're teaching the kids from a young age. From kindergarten all the way through grade 12, the kids are getting a great vocal education," Jozwiak said.

ILMEA All-State Choirs are made up of about 250 of the best high school singers in the state. This year, WHS will send Kaley Beckman, Chris Crenshaw and Thomas Spukas, who was also selected for Honors All-State Choir as one of the top five baritones in the competitive District 7.

Kaley said she was inspired to join choir after seeing the high school madrigal singers perform at her elementary school. But as a freshman, Kaley said she was anxious and unsure on stage.

"Now, as a senior, my nerves have turned into the desire to perform music in the most expressive way possible, and I am more comfortable singing in front of others than speaking. This transformation did not happen because of time though, it happened because of my perseverance and the generosity of my teachers Mr. Jozwiak and Mr. Rausch," she said

Over the decades, more than 100 WHS students have been selected for All-State Choir. The honor has become a generational one for students and their siblings who hope to achieve the same recognition. Underclassmen also strive for the goal. Students are eligible to audition beginning in their sophomore year.

“They’re excited about auditioning because they’re seeing the success and celebrations of Chris and Kaley and Tom ... They’re saying ‘That’s an individual goal that I want to reach. Help me reach that goal,’” Jozwiak said.

Haley Chellberg, a junior who was one of six WHS students selected for District 7 ILMEA Choir this school year, said she’s also grown considerably as a musician over the last few years.

“Choir has definitely made me more patient and has really helped me work as a team better and has helped me be able to help others in a more efficient and meaningful way,” she said.

Jozwiak said he appreciates District 200 and the greater Woodstock community’s commitment to music and the arts and the sense of pride in the many successes.

“Art and music communicate with people in ways that math and science, English and reading don’t,” Jozwiak said. “Scores don’t make people feel things, where music and art can show people a humanity that we all crave and don’t know how to express or explain.”

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