

Teacher of the Month: Mr. Stacey Dunn

By Jordan Weber

Class of 2010

Along with the usual spontaneous blast of horns and pounding of drums, there is a quiet lull of pride in the band hall these days.

This comes from the last fall's outstanding marching season, led by band director Stacey Dunn. The season resulted in Southwest marching band being named 12th in the state of Texas by the University Interscholastic League (UIL), and the first Fort Worth band ever to compete at the state level.

"The students had a goal to obtain," Mr. Dunn says.

The journey to State competition for the marching band began with Mr. Dunn's commitment to his students. Marching band member Senior Andrew DeLuna remembers when his teacher encouraged students the night before a competition.

"Mr. Dunn had a meeting with us before the area competition," he says. "It was very moving and inspirational."

Students like Andrew and band member Senior Matt Smith remember the two-hour long practices that occurred nearly every morning last fall, and the incredible focus of the students, Mr. Dunn and the other instructors.

"Over the years, we've been getting more focused on the task at hand," Matt says. "We focused a lot more on marching this year."

Senior Andrew DeLuna also credits the student's spirit as a deciding factor on their road to state.

"We had a lot of good players that kept on getting better," DeLuna says. "And then they would share the knowledge with the younger kids. People just had more heart this year."

Mr. Dunn and the rest of the band teaching staff, besides arranging a strict practicing schedule, also developed a more specialized program, with different directors counseling their areas sections. This allowed students a more nurturing and productive learning experience.

Mr. Dunn explains this year's strategy for success.

"The teaching staff is focused in different areas that have allowed us to accelerate our skill level," he says.

As Mr. Dunn and the band climbed the competition ladder, their scores allowed them to finally compete at the State level. Despite Mr. Dunn's dedication to his students, he places their success on their collective abilities.

"I think they made it as far as they did because of their ability to perform at a higher level," Mr. Dunn says.

When the band finally arrived in San Antonio to compete in the State competition, pride and, of course, anxiety laid thick on the student's minds. To ease the nerves of his students though, Mr. Dunn had a special surprise.

"The night before the event," Mr. Dunn says, "we showed a video of past alumni, and they spoke and encouraged the students. A lot of them were all the way back from the 70s, and the first graduating class."

Although the band ended up finishing in 12th place, Mr. Dunn and his students still regard it as a huge accomplishment due to the size of the competition, and the distinction of being the first Fort Worth band ever to compete state-wide.

As for the future, Mr. Dunn plans to continue his hard work and focus in the hopes of a repeat of last season.

"We would like to go back and place in the top 10," he says.

Mr. Dunn requested that any students wishing to join the colorguard should apply, as he is looking to increase its size. He thinks that a larger colorguard "is going to make us more competitive and more able to move on to the next level."

Jordan Weber is a member of the Raider's Digest staff. For more work by SHS student journalists, check out www.my.hsj.org/texas/fortworth/southwest