

FVL middle school bands make music to praise the Lord

By Kenny Vandenberg
Loop Writer

About 85 students are participating in the FVL middle school band program, which is broken up into the Cadet Band and the Concert Winds. Individual lessons are taught at the various schools by James Neujahr and Robert Kramer. Group rehearsals are at FVL on Saturday mornings.

The Cadet Band is led by Kramer and consists of first year band students. Neujahr and Amy Nogar direct the Concert Winds, which is comprised of second-through fourth-year students.

The Concert Winds are currently focusing on two pieces of music. The first is "Agōn," by James Curnow. Agōn is a Greek word referring to athletic or artistic competition worthy of hard work, dedication and discipline. It is a very challenging piece for the young musicians. The other is "Silverbrook," by Michael Sweeny. "Silverbrook" is described as a powerhouse of a piece that contains much musical depth and variety.

Matteah Gehl is in the seventh grade St. John Wrightstown. She plays clarinet after observing her sister play it when she was younger.

"I liked it so then I joined FVL schools band," Gehl said. "I learned to sight read, and right now I'm learning high notes and low notes that I didn't learn last year; it helps me grow as a musician since I work on harder music than I did last year."

Immanuel Greenville eighth-grader Courtney Kufahl wants to grow in her knowledge of music. She plays the saxophone. She chose this instrument after her older sister played it; she liked the sound.

"I thought it sounded awesome when she got into the more ad-



Concert Winds

Pictured are some of the members of FVL's middle school level band, which is made up of musicians from many of the Lutheran schools in the area. In front, left to right, are Andrew Needham, Rebecca Eveland and Matteah Gehl. In back, left to right, are Emma Nilson, Courtney Kufahl, Eric Kellerstrass, Kisie Temu, Ryan Feuerstahler, Natalie Mroczynski and Bethany Fick.

Photo by K. Vandenberg

vanced music," Kufahl said. "I'm learning how to read music. Being in band helps me to meet new people who I know will be lifelong friends who will help me grow in my faith and grow my God-given talents."

St. Mark sixth-grader Emma Nilson wants to take her trombone career all the way through college with high hopes of being part of the UW-Madison marching band. Choosing to play trombone was easy; most of her family has played it, she said.

"I've learned lots of stuff about music and band, but I also learned a lot about teamwork and social skills; I know I can play the song alone, but everyone has to work together to make a perfect harmony," Nilson said. "The best

part of being in band is the concert because by then everything is perfected, and when we play we can listen to the beauty of the music."

St. Paul Green Bay eighth-grader Eric Kellerstrass plays percussion and has plans to be in his high school band, and he also has a band with a couple friends.

"I really want to create music, and I want to share music with as many people as possible," Kellerstrass said. "The reason I chose percussion is kind of a long story; way back when I was in kindergarten I got the game "Guitar Hero Metallica" for the Nintendo Wii. The instrument I got was the drums, and now I play percussion and drum set."

That part is history, but he's got plans moving forward for improvement.

"I try to rehearse with the band every Saturday, and I practice drum set every day for at least half an hour. I try to play triplets really fast before I practice. Currently in private lessons I'm working on circular rhythms and also learning to get better with sight reading," Kellerstrass said. "I learned many things in band; I learned how to play with other musicians and in live performances. I'm also learning on dealing with mistakes with myself and with others. Talking with the other percussionists really helps me with getting help with my technique."

Bethany Fick is a sixth-grader at Mount Olive Appleton. She plays bassoon. When deciding on an instrument, she remembers liking the size of the bassoon being so big, and she thought it was going to be easy.

"I'm working on my really high and really low notes. I've learned fingering how to read notes and how to make my embouchure work for me," Fick said. "Band has helped me move my fingers fast enough for the music number. I will play music in church with this talent I have been given."

Kisie Temu is an eighth-grader at Shepherd of the Valley Menasha. She plays flute and piccolo. From a very young age she liked the high-pitched instrument. Playing piccolo, a higher-pitched flute, became an "add-on" to playing flute.

"In band I learn about not just the music, but about the hard work and responsibilities of playing. Making social connections really helps me play more confidently," Temu said. "I feel the best part of band is that all around atmosphere where everyone is friendly and happy, which makes the music sound better and more upbeat. I hope to continue with band when I grow older, and play for my church or maybe just to play for myself and continue to grow for as long as possible."

For Andrew Needham, a sixth-grader from Mount Olive Appleton, music is a family affair. He likes the brass family and chose trumpet also because his mother plays it.

"I usually play through a song, stopping at parts I struggle with at and practice until I can play it well. I normally practice music that I will play in the concert," Needham said. "The best part of being in band is to prepare ourselves to play in a concert and see how much we've improved. I will keep playing trumpet once I get in

high school."

Eighth-grader Natalie Mroczynski attends St. Paul Green Bay and plays trumpet. This was her second choice after trying the flute.

"I wanted to sound loud and amazing; I wanted to play songs in my church, and I wanted to surprise people," Mroczynski said.

Immanuel Greenville eighth-grader Rebecca Eveland plays alto saxophone. She chose sax because her cousin played it.

"I really wanted to play advanced music like he did so I started playing the alto saxophone," Eveland said. "I plan on playing more instruments in the future. For now I play piano, violin, soprano and alto saxophone. I hope I can play high school and college band and maybe play in church."

Ryan Feuerstahler, a seventh-grader at Trinity Neenah, plays the euphonium, a baritone, brass instrument. Euphonium means sweet-voiced.

"I chose this instrument because it was practically the only one I could play; I could switch between notes easily, and it looked fun to play," Feuerstahler said. "Being in a band helps me learn to work together with other musicians as well as improving my musical abilities; I think the best part of being in a band is flawlessly completing a piece both in rehearsals and concerts and hearing the applause of the audience. This is very satisfying. In the future, I would like to play for church services or concerts or just for the entertainment of others at home."

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