

New director takes reins

By DAVID ANDERSON
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of community band



Bulletin photo by David Anderson

The clarinet section of the South Washington County Community Band played last week at Park High. From left, Paul Eger, Susan Hill and Sue Kremet.

For the past 18 years, the sounds of the South Washington County Community Band have been under the direction of Paul Storti. Storti recently retired because of health reasons, and the 55 members have a new leader.

Emily Weins, Hastings, has conducted the band since September, and said it's been a wonderful experience. "It's great to be a part of," she said. "I really like the opportunity to perform, because it gives me a chance to still be involved with music."

This is Weins' first conducting job. She graduated from college with an elementary music teaching degree, and has taught music to children. Now, Weins is dealing with adults and high school students of all ages and talent levels.

"The different levels of ability and personalities is a great way to bridge generations together," Weins said. "It gives younger players an idea of what they could become later on."

Weins, who's been with the band since last year, originally was a flute player. She said the transfer from player to conductor was a

Beautiful music

A new director takes over South Washington County's Community Band / 4A



learning experience. "It's tough to read a score," she said. "It's a lot more difficult than reading one sheet of music. You need to know where everyone should be positioned, and how to make adjustments during a performance. If the conductor stops, things fall apart."

Even though she started as a musician, Weins knew she wanted to teach music, and said conductors should have a desire to teach before picking up the baton.

The community band was established in 1983 by Storti and District 833 Community Education. It performs several concerts throughout the year at schools, community festivals and at Como Park in St. Paul. Last week, the band held a joint concert with the Prescott, Wis. Middle School Band.

Debi Prokosch, Cottage Grove, has played flute in the band since 1983. She saw an advertisement for the band in the Community Education calendar, and was a former student of Storti. Although she hadn't played in more than 20 years, she went to check it out.

"I decided to go and found others

who I went to school with," she said. "We all had Paul Storti as a teacher, and once you play an instrument, it's hard to get rid of that feeling."

Prokosch, who now plays flute and piccolo, said the band has been a special experience for her, and appreciated the opportunity to play music with her two daughters.

"We're a true community band," she said. "We've had people from elementary school to people over 75 years old. There's so many cool people in this band, and we're all here to play music."

Cottage Grove resident Kathy Kullmann is another original band member.

After graduating from high school, she had a few opportunities to play clarinet in church, but always wanted something more. Storti, her former teacher, told her to join the band and she's been there ever since.

"It's special because we just get together and have fun," she said. "We know we're not perfect when we play, so we just have a good time. It's been an enjoyable experience."

Although the band members tend to come and go throughout the years, Weins said the band continues to thrive and survive. "I think we'll be around for quite a while," she said. "We're always looking for musicians, so stop by one of our rehearsals and check us out."

The band regularly practices from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. Tuesdays at Park High School in Cottage Grove. During the summer, practices are held at Cottage Grove Junior High.

The band plays a variety of music from classical to jazz, and no auditions are required.

The majority of members are former students of Storti, who taught music at Park High for many years. However, some are recent graduates and current high school students.

"We give something everyone can play," Weins said. "Our goal is to make it a true community band."

"We simply get together to make music and have fun," Weins said. "We love music, and want to share it with others."

WASHINGTON COUNTY BRIEFING

COTTAGE GROVE

Free band concert set: The next South Washington County Community Band Concert will be at 7:30 p.m. March 13 at Park High School in Cottage Grove.

The community band, led by interim director Emily Weins, will be playing with the Prescott (Wis.) Middle School band. Weins has taken the place of former director Paul Storti, who retired because of health reasons.

"The community band is still going strong and has a full schedule of concerts planned," said flute player Debi Prokosch.

There is no cost to join the bands; the concerts also are free.

Anyone interested in joining, particularly percussionists, should call Weins at (651) 438-0894.

— MARY DIVINE, STAFF WRITER