

Dear Parents, Students, and Alumni,

I would like to take this opportunity to share with you my reflections over the last nine years as the marching band director for the Souderton Area High School Big Red Marching Band. I would like to start by thanking the past and current Big Red Band Booster Presidents for all their support of the marching band program, the staff and myself. I would like to recognize Rich Sharp (08' – 10') for working with me in establishing the responsibilities and expectations for the BRBB as it related to the Marching Band program. Thanks to Beth Reifsnnyder (10' – 12') for her work in developing excellent staff to parent working relationships throughout her term. Phil Giagnacova (12' – 14') was one of the most enthusiastic band presidents who was a spokesperson for the marching band and for all of his work related to fundraising and making the marching band's trip to Walt Disney World a reality. And finally, I would like to recognize the BRBB's current president Marie Allen. Marie's leadership as BRBB president these past two years should be commended. She has been a band parent for seven years, a color guard instructor during Ms. Tink maternity leave for the Forte Indoor Guard, a chaperone to Walt Disney World, and great supporter and advisor to me.

Special thanks go to the following band parents who I had the opportunity to work with very closely over the years. Thank you for making my job easier and making the Big Red Marching Band what it is today. Thank you...

Clem Clemente, Barb Denison, Lori Kosinski, Bonnie West, Tina Deitrich, Sue Mundie, Tara Kaufman, Mike Rafter, Kelly McMullen, Linda and Bill Schloo, and Georgia Myers.

Now I would like to share with you some interesting facts about the marching band over my nine year tenure as marching band director. There have been over 250 students in the marching band program and 35 sets of siblings. The Sharp family had three children and the Schloo family had four children under my direction. The marching band and indoor program have had 21 different staff members specializing in the areas of percussion, guard, and visual arts. Mr. Tucker has been the assistant marching band director for 14 years and I wish him the best of luck as he takes on the full responsibilities of being the new Souderton Area Big Red Marching Band Director in December. Thank you to Mr. Wilson, Ms. Tink, Mrs. Esquirell, Ms. Rudnik, Mr. Kostovick, and Mr. Mascaro for making this year's marching band show such a success.

The following is a timeline of the Big Red Marching Band program starting back in January of 2007 after I accepted the position as Director of Bands. Souderton Area High School Principal, Dr. Sam Varano recommended that I create a mission statement to be shared with parents and students at the time. The intension was to communicate my future goals for the marching band program. Before I arrived there were many obstacles that needed to be addressed that occurred prior to my appointment.

What the Band Program was like in the winter of 2007

- The Big Red Marching Band had five different band directors over the course of 20 years. The longest running term being four years. The only stable entity within the band program was the BRBB.
- Summer of 2006 before band camp, the current director left unexpectedly leaving Mr. Tucker and the marching band staff with no show, no music and no drill.
- Much tension was created between the instructor's and BRBB because of lack of consistent leadership over the last 20 years.
- Band members only talked and interacted with their own sections.
- Lack of school and community spirit as a marching band when it came to football games and local parades. The emphasis was only on competitive marching band.

Mission Statement for the Big Red Marching Band Program 2007- 2010

1. Establishing an inviting and attainable program for kids and parents to participate in.
2. To have a higher student retention rate from year to year
3. More interest and involvement in music education
4. Developing a well-rounded curriculum and experience for students (Football Games, parades, school performances, competitions and festivals, and trips.)

What the Marching Band Program is like in the winter of 2015

- The Big Red Marching Band demonstrates **pride** and **passion** in what they do
- The Big Red Marching Band has a strong presence of student **loyalty** and **respect** for one another.
- The Big Red Marching Band is a family that **cares** for each other. They may not always agree but they have each other's backs. Every student is a **Brother** or **Sister** in **Music** who will guide future generations of marching band students to greatness.
- The Big Red Marching Band is full of young men and women who have **honor** and integrity.

Other accomplishments of the BRMB and BRBB

- Invited to perform at Citizens Band Park for the 2008 Philadelphia Phillies World Series Championship Celebration
- 2011 received a 6th place victory out of 33 bands across the east coast at the USSBA National Competitions at J. Birney Crum Stadium in Allentown ,PA
- 2012 Awarded the PA State Championship in Group IIIA Competition.
- 2013 Big Red Marching Band traveled to Orlando Florida to perform in the Electric Light Parade down Main Street USA at Walt Disney World.

In closing I would like to say, that it has been my honor and privilege to have served the Big Red Marching Band as their director for the last nine years and I wish the students of the Souderton Area High School Big Red Marching Band, the parents of the BRBB, and Mr. Tucker the best of luck in the future.

Let's Go Big Red!

Stephen L. Straka
Marching Band Director SAHS 07'-15'