

Blacksburg High School Bands

Blacksburg, Virginia -- A 20-Year Virginia Honor Band -- VBODA "Hall of Fame" Band

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Blacksburg High School Bands earn 20TH Honor Band Award enter Virginia Band and Orchestra Directors Association Hall of Fame

The Blacksburg High School Band program joined elite company on Thursday, March 10, when it earned **Virginia Honor Band** status for the 20th time since the award was established by the Virginia Band and Orchestra Directors Association (VBODA). Achieving this status 20 times gives a school recognition with a "Hall of Fame" award, which has gone to only four other high schools in the Commonwealth.

To be declared a Virginia Honor Band, a high school must get two Superior ratings, one for marching band and one for symphonic band. The Blacksburg Bruin Marching Band earned a Superior rating at the state marching festival in October. The Blacksburg Symphonic Band received a Superior rating at the VBODA District VI Concert Festival held at Lynchburg College in Lynchburg.

The band performed three pieces, "Imperial March" by Karl King, "Every Morning New" by David Holsinger, and "Tancredi Overture" by Gioacchino Rossini, which were rated by three judges. The band was also judged on its ability to sight read and perform a piece of music it had not seen before.

The Virginia Honor Band recognition and award was established in 1981 by VBODA to recognize schools with a comprehensive music program. In 1990, the Ten Year Honor Band Award, the Fifteen Year Honor Roll Recognition, and the Twenty Year "Hall of Fame" Award were created. Four high schools, Lake Braddock (Burke), Charlottesville (Charlottesville), Hermitage (Henrico), and Robinson (Fairfax), are in the Hall of Fame. Blacksburg now joins them.

Blacksburg started its run in the 1983-84 school year under director Dr. Diana Love. The band picked up 18 Honor Band awards under Dr. Love until her retirement in 2007. The 19th award came in 2008-09 under director Darrell Pearman, who also won four awards as band director at Woodbridge High School. This 20th award is special for the seniors in the band, who were freshmen when Dr. Love retired.

Mr. Pearman said, "I'm proud of these kids. They overcame adversity and carried on the tradition of the band." Senior Elise Wilson said, "We're so excited that we finally achieved this. We're proud that it could be us." Senior Dilaura Kiran said, "There is excitement and relief. We have been working so hard for so long for this."

The trip to Lynchburg was not without pitfalls -- from snowfalls and roof falls.

The Symphonic Band began to work on its pieces right after the holiday break, to be performed at the Concert Festival in early March. The extended break due to multiple snow days put a crimp in the preparation, especially since the music is at the highest, most-difficult grade VI level. The expected return to school with intense practice by the dedicated students was expected to get the band back on track.

The collapse of the Blacksburg High School gym on February 13 brought all those plans crashing down. The high school was closed for another week. Many of the instruments and the music were inaccessible, in the band room at BHS where no one was permitted to enter. But the show must go on and rehearsals must be held. There were calls from many sources with offers of support and assistance. The Virginia Tech Music Department offered its rehearsal hall for two days so the students could get together to pick up where they left off before the snow days. The department also offered several instruments for students whose instruments were locked away in the band room. Music Doctors, Mainstream Music, and Bridge-Kaldro Music stores all offered short-term rentals of instruments with favorable terms. Families and friends opened their closets and offered what they had from playing days past to fill in where they could. There were some instruments from Blacksburg Middle School that were pressed into service, but it wasn't easy outfitting a full symphonic band on short notice.

School resumed on February 24 on a split schedule at the Blacksburg Middle School on a block schedule. The Symphonic Band met for its regular class meeting and those who could stay for the next class period extended their rehearsal time. The Winter Concert became instead a special rehearsal, with Dr. Love and Brian Quackenbush, band director at Cave Spring High School in Roanoke, critiquing the performance as experienced concert judges. A Saturday rehearsathon gave the band extended time to fine-tune their music.

Mr. Pearman was able to make one trip into the band room when classes resumed and collected music folders and a van load of small instruments. A week before the Concert Festival, county maintenance workers were available with a truck for a second visit, so Mr. Pearman was able to collect more instruments and the tuxedos and dresses for the band to wear for the festival performance.

Now that the Hall of Fame award is in hand, Mr. Pearman, the band, and the parents can take a deep breath and relax. Next up for the bands is a reward trip to Atlanta in April, where the Symphonic Band will perform in the Festivals of Music event. The Symphonic Band and the Concert Band will also be preparing for its spring concert and a continued savoring of its elite position in the VBODA Hall of Fame.