

Catholic schools 'band' together

Mike Latona/Catholic Courier

Going all the way back to last fall, musicians from eight Catholic schools have set aside many Saturdays to ready for performances that didn't occur until this month. But for Alyssa Hume, she can't consider her time commitment a burden when she's doing what she loves the most.

"I just have an obsession with music," stated Alyssa, 14, an eighth-grader from All Saints Academy. She's a clarinetist in the Diocesan Select Concert Band, which played an evening concert at Aquinas Institute May 21 and has also planned a tour of several Catholic schools.

The 41-member band is made up of students from All Saints Academy, Our Mother of Sorrows, Holy Cross, St. Lawrence, St. Pius Tenth, Siena Catholic Academy, McQuaid Jesuit and Sacred Heart. Serving as director is Frank Anselmo, a music teacher at several of the band's participating schools.

Membership is open to youths in grades 4-8. Approximately half of the band members attend All Saints Academy, a grades 7-8 school. Anselmo explained that many of those students formerly attended Rochester's Sacred Heart School and Greece's St. Lawrence, St. John the Evangelist and St. Charles Borromeo schools, which all eliminated their seventh and eighth grades beginning this school year.

The band originated during the 1999-2000 school year. According to Anselmo, all Monroe County-area Catholic schools are eligible. Members are selected following auditions at the start of the school year. The band is sponsored by Aquinas Institute and practices at the high school.

Mother Nature dealt a rough start to the 2003 schedule, when a drenching rain wiped out a scheduled performance at the Rochester Lilac Festival May 12. The band moved safely indoors for the May 21 concert at Aquinas, as well as for the two-day tour May 29-30, which will include stops at many of the schools where band members are students.

Each year Anselmo devises a different theme; for instance, the 2002 select band paid tribute to the Sept. 11 tragedy by featuring patriotic American tunes. This year's group is offering a combination of classical music from such composers as Brahms and Rimsky-Korsakov, as well as modern jazz selections such



Rebecca Gosselin/Catholic Courier

Michael Bilinski (left), Chris Lamb and Jerry Cardilicchia, members of the Diocese of Rochester's Select Concert Band, play their saxophones during a May 21 concert at Rochester's Aquinas Institute.



John Coyle (right) and Charles Belfield play their trombones during the concert.

Youth

as Glenn Miller's "In the Mood."

Tenor saxophonist Stephen Gaudio, 13, views his participation as a chance to play at a higher skill level and in a larger unit than normal.

"It's a lot more advanced, a lot better sounding than if I'm in a band with 20 or 15 people," said Stephen, a seventh-grader at All Saints who's in his first year with the band.

Trombonist Charles Belfield, an original select band member, ob-

School.

"We're a lot better than the past," agreed Alyssa, a second-year participant.

Anselmo acknowledged that he's raised the bar each year, yet the band is up to the task. "We practice once a week if we're lucky, and they're still coming through. I'm proud of them," Anselmo said.

Alto saxophonist Patt Montanaro, an eighth-grader at All Saints Academy, said the time he's put into the select band has helped his individual skills as well. "To be better you have to make some sacrifices," said Patt, 13.

Along with quality music comes some quality camaraderie among the group. "I know a lot more kids. It's helped me to have more friends," said flutist Christina Altobello, 14, an eighth-grader at Holy Cross School. She, like Charles, is an inaugural member.

Patt, a third-year member who's moving on to high school next year, is a bit wistful as the band's concert schedule winds down.

"It's kind of sad, it's going to be my last one. That kind of motivates me to do my best," Patt said.

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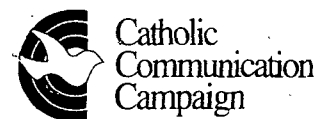
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