

SHHS Band Program History

Begun by a music man named H.A. Lee in the late 1920's the Science Hill High School Band was a group that grew out of one of the earliest school music programs in the state, The SHHS Orchestra! Early members in the program tell about purchasing their instrument directly from the band director and having rehearsals after school hours. After a hiatus caused by the depression, the band was reformed in 1937 under the direction of F. W. Magurean. With high expectations of practice and dedication, the band quickly grew in size and quality. Uniforms were purchased and the band grew to about 100 members in 1940. A trip to the National Concert Band Festival in Charlotte was carried out in 1939 that included the band, choir, and orchestra.

Mr. Maguarean left in 1941 and Mr. Warren Weddle was hired. Mr. Weddle's career at Science Hill spanned 27 years (current record) and had many highlights. Nicknamed "Weddle's Warriors" the band traveled to the World's Fair in New York, performed in parades throughout the region and was well known for its size and beautiful uniforms. Mr. George Buda was hired as assistant band director. Many alumni remember the team effort and close relationship between Mr. and Mrs. Weddle quite fondly to this day.

Mr. Jerry Cole was hired as band director in 1967. During his fourteen years as director, the 'Topper Band' was recognized as an outstanding concert program. Many years of consecutive Superiors at concert festival and a performance at the state music conference attest to the strength of the program. Major trips included Mexico City, Saint Louis, and Atlanta. Mr. Randy Coapstick and Mr. Vincent Dial joined the band program during Mr. Cole's time as director.

Mr. Mark Bays was band director from 1981-1984. There was a change of direction within the program with an increased emphasis on marching band. New uniforms were purchased that had the students performing in white tuxedos with white top hats.

Mr. George Jones took over as band director from 1984-1987. An emphasis on concert band was begun and a major trip was planned to Orlando.

Mr. Thomas Stites became the director of bands in 1987. Under his direction, the 'Topper band' grew in strength and numbers due to the combined efforts of many people. Periods of strong support from administrators, city government, and an active band boosters group resulted in new uniforms, band room, and outstanding bands. Recent highlights include the Honolulu Holiday Parade, a 2007 performance at Carnegie Hall, Macy's Thanksgiving Parade in 1996 and 2000, the Tournament of Roses Parade in 1999 and 2009, thirteen years of consecutive Superiors in concert festival, and a performance at the Tennessee Music Educators Conference. Mr. Mark Foster joined the program in 1998 as Associate Director of Bands. Mr. Fred Humphreys joined us first as a volunteer and as a part time director beginning in 2004. Due to Mr. Humphreys' health, Mr. Dan McGuire joined the staff as a part-time director in 2005 and became a full time director in 2006.

Mr. Coapstick retired at the end of the 2007-2008 school year as director of the Indian Trail Middle School band and was replaced by Mr. Preston Holley.

In January 2009, Mr. Stites assumed an administrative position in the Johnson City School System and was replaced by Dr. Carson Vermillion as Director of Bands.