

LIFESTYLE

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Lane steps down as band director

BY MICHAEL WINTERMUTE Wyoming County Press Examiner



PHOTOS COURTESY OF CATHY STRAUCH Katie Lane likes the beat of her marching band from the stands at a football game last fall.



Katie also had the Trail Marching Band participate in the Memorial Day parades of Dalton, Factoryville and Nicholson.



Katie Lane with Senior marching band members 2013: Victoria Hegedty, Janine Strauch, and Katie Seigle.

Anyone truly invested in music knows it's a passion that lasts a lifetime.

Katie Lane, who recently resigned as band director for Lackawanna Trail, exemplifies that passion and has left a lasting impression on the hundreds of students she's guided.

Lane, 32, chose to leave the program after being involved with Trail marching band since the age of 12.

When she first became involved as an instructor for the band program, it was only a short time after having graduated high school, while she was still in college, but some key aspects of the program had changed.

"When I went to Trail, we were a competition band," Lane said. "We had always been successful."

Lane joined the program in the absence of the man who directed band when she was still a student, Jim Smith.

Once Smith was no longer in the program, competition ceased, so Lane used her first years with the program building it back up.

"I just wanted to bring it back to the quality he had kept," Lane said.

Lane fondly recalls a time in those first few years when her students showed genuine excitement over an improved score, even though it didn't allow them to advance to higher competition.

The marching band was competing in the region's chapter championships, which determined which bands would head to the Atlantic Coast Conference, and had vowed to hit an 80.

They were delighted to hear they'd broken their mark.

"The kids broke a score of an 80, which is not that good," Lane said. "But they celebrated and were more excited than all of the kids who were actually going to the ACC."

That standard of self-motivation became a staple of Lane's time with Trail.

Above all, she wanted the students to improve themselves and take pride in their successes.

"I think we never, especially in our early years, pushed winning - we never pushed being better than anyone else. We just pushed improving ourselves," Lane said. "I didn't care if they won, but they had to always do their best."

She added: "I think, also, we put a lot of pride into the fact that, while we may not be the best, we would always be the band with the most heart and the most character."

After those several years of rebuilding the program, Trail had a run of 10 ACC competitions in 12 years.

Some notable ACC placements include:

- *2007's "Like Clockwork, Moment in Time," which took 2nd place in invitational at ACC, as well as 'Best Music' and 'Best Woodwind'

- *2009's "Alice Unraveled," which placed 11th in Group 1 as well as taking the title 'Best Drum Major' with David Stark

- *2011's "Carmen," where woodwinds placed 7th

As Lane puts it, "It's not the size of the band in the show, it's the size of the show in the band."

Of course, she wasn't alone.

Successfully organizing the logistics of a competitive marching band takes more than a handful of instructors and helpers.

Whether it's hauling equipment to practices and competitions or carefully watching every practice to help hone the performance, many others worked to make the program successful.

"I don't think people really know how much time goes into it," Lane said.

Take Dave and Kelly Hopkins, for example, who are husband and wife.

The Hopkins', whose daughter will be a senior at Trail next year, were instrumental at every turn: driving kids to practice, assisting with the show, and keeping up morale.

"My whole staff, all of us, we always made sure that the kids who didn't have money to eat had money to eat, the kids that didn't have a warm coat had a warm coat, and if they didn't have their homework done, we made them do their homework," Lane said.

It was an investment that may seem is extreme, but the end result is undeniable – students came away having grown from their experiences.

"We've certainly had kids who I truly believe wouldn't have even graduated high school if they weren't in band," Lane said. "Some kids didn't have the strong family background they needed but, when they became a part of the band, they really saw that they could do better."

For Lane, her time with Trail is not about success in competition, but the victory in changing the lives of her students.

Although she's no longer with the marching band, Lane is still involved with the drama program at the school, as well as teaching history.

With a little extra time on her hands, she'll be spending more evenings with her one-year-old daughter, appropriately named Penny Lane.

As for the future of competitive marching at Trail, the decision lies in the hand of the next director.

"I hope they continue. I think that competing really means a lot to the kids, and it gives them a unique venue where they're appreciated," Lane said. "It gives them a place where people really care about what they're doing."