

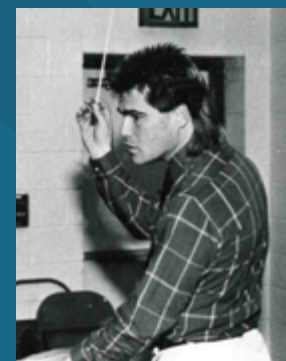
THE DAVID STAUFFER LEGACY

by Craig Baldwin '11

The words music and excellence have been practically interchangeable for nearly four decades at Curley. The accomplishments of the musicians who have called Curley home over the years are difficult to match, and achieving this level of brilliance has been no easy task. Simply ask any number of the countless alumni who have found success in life from the skills they have attained in the choir and instrumental music programs, or more importantly, ask former Director of Instrumental Music, David Stauffer, who in 2019 retired from his position after 39 years. Music has been a way of life for Mr. Stauffer since his upbringing outside of Dover, Pennsylvania in a family that knew music to be an essential element of education.



He therefore was exposed to many musical genres as a child. "I grew up listening to jazz and swing music, along with watching Jerry Lewis movies with the 'big bands.' My brother was also a student at the Johns Hopkins Peabody Institute and was always bringing different musicians around the house. I would see the York Symphony Orchestra or a concert at Peabody almost weekly," he recalled. It was in third grade that he began musical training of his own on the clarinet through private lessons. By high school he was a member of the marching band, the choral music program, as well as the York Youth Symphony Orchestra, studying both clarinet and saxophone. What many may not know about Dave is that he was also an avid wrestler and weightlifter in his youth, recognizing the importance of being an athlete in the development of his musical ability. "Athletics require competition not only with others, but also with yourself. You learn to develop an internal hunger to do things the right way."



It was an easy choice for Dave when it was time to choose a college. "Music was what I was good at, and Towson State was the best place to study it. It was the only place I wanted to go." Dave received his Bachelor of Science in Music Education from Towson State University in the spring of 1980, and it was the following winter when he learned of a position opening at a

nearby high school. When asked how he came into his role at Curley, he responded "I just kind of ended up there," claiming that at the time he just needed a job. "I heard about the position through the music program at Towson. I had spent all summer at the beach, and was working at the ski slopes during the winter. I heard that Curley was hiring for a Band Director, and knew that those positions were hard to come by. I thought that it would be a stepping stone to something bigger. I never expected to be there as long as I was at the time." Dave found a music program that was nearly non-existent compared to what it has grown into today upon arriving at Curley in 1981. "Nineteen elementary-level students, two guitar classes, one brass class, no rehearsals, and no budget," he recalled of his first year as director. When asked when his vision for the music program began to take shape, he replied "Every day. Every day I was putting myself in that moment, recognizing what needed to be done for the band to be successful, and getting it done in order for us to move forward." Dave certainly had quite the workload early in his career, which included recruiting musicians, purchasing new instruments, and organizing the band's first concerts, however he didn't stop there. Aside from the growth the band itself experienced over the years, Dave was instrumental in the development of the music program as a whole at Curley. This included being the driving voice behind adding a choral music program in 1997, a drumline in 2006, as well as organizing the transition of rehearsal space; from holding classes onstage in the auditorium in his first year, to various locations throughout the building, and eventually to the Holthaus Fine Arts Center, which opened in 2010. "My greatest challenge has been building this program from the ground up over the years, but it has been an amazing experience working with countless groups of talented people."



If you happen to be in Curley's Student Dining Room on the evening of the first Saturday of March, you will experience first-hand many of those "talented people" who have certainly not forgotten their roots under David Stauffer's direction. Listening to the sounds of the Alumni Jazz Band during the tradition of All That Curley Jazz, one cannot help but feel the nurturing education received by these men as students in the music program, many of whom come back to Curley from various career fields to share in the occasion, and to play under their mentor. The performance serves not only as an enjoyable experience for all in attendance, but also as an opportunity for Curley brothers to reminisce.

Dave's time working at Curley has come to a conclusion, but it is safe to say that his legacy through those he influenced over the course of his career will live on. When asked what he looks forward to most about retirement, he happily expressed, "Not driving," as he refers to the two hour commute he has made from Dover, Pennsylvania to Curley and back every day for most of his career. He also noted that his work will continue, however he is looking forward to choosing his own hours. "Work is my fun. I love working with my hands, building things, and making improvements to my 'hobby farm,'" as he refers to his home, the 17th century farm house in which he was raised, and now owns with his family. Thanks to that same work ethic and dedication that Dave has instilled in his musicians, the Curley bands have consistently achieved a standard of excellence over the years, and have established themselves as a nationally-recognized program by adjudicators and professionals from across the country. Travelling to cities such as Boston, Charleston, Chicago, New York and most recently, Nashville, the Curley Concert Band, Jazz Ensemble, and Drumline consistently receive superior ratings during their annual adjudications. Dave described his tenure of four decades as an educator at Curley as "...a pool of warm thoughts. This is where I grew up, and I am blessed to have so many wonderful memories, and countless experiences to look back on. I've had the opportunity to help thousands of young men use their talents to communicate through music, and that is a chance that very few people have in their lives."

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"Producing All That Curley Jazz is always a highlight. I know for me, playing in the Alumni Jazz Band is the best way to give back to Mr. Stauffer and the music program. He made us who we are today as men and as musicians."

- Dave Makowiecki '93, who organizes the Curley Jazz Bands' performance each year

"The level of performance that Mr. Stauffer expected and exhibited each day was contagious. Being a student of his was not always easy, but the respect his alumni have for him is remarkable. He was more than just our band teacher; he taught life lessons that are applicable in every field, such as understanding that life is a process, and while it will have its ups and downs, one must have focus, dedication and a drive for perfection on a daily basis."

- Chris Young '11

"Mr. Stauffer taught me the patience and discipline that helped me to become a well-rounded student. Despite just being a freshman in college, I have already made good use of the time management skills and the work ethic that he taught me. In a musical sense, his instruction has put me in a position where my skills are equal or superior to many of my peers who did not have him as a teacher. Despite the world of music having a lot to offer, there is nothing quite like playing in a Curley band."

- Ethan Bower '18

"The opportunity to work with Mr. Stauffer and the Alumni Jazz Band is a time to relive the bond that we all formed as we worked and performed together. Most people talk about the teachers that changed their lives, but aren't lucky enough to make those connections again. Alumni Jazz gives us that opportunity."

- Steve Streckfus '93

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