

Manistee director of bands presented Teacher of the Year award at outdoor band concert

Kyle Kotecki , Manistee News Advocate May 27, 2021
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Andrea Mack, Manistee Area Public Schools director of bands, was presented with the 2020 Michigan School Band and Orchestra Association Teacher of the Year during an outdoor concert at the Manistee Middle High School building Monday evening.

Kyle Kotecki/News Advocate

MANISTEE — The Manistee Middle and High School bands' outdoor concert on Monday had a brief pause in action for a very special reason.

Andrea Mack, Manistee Area Public Schools director of bands, was presented an award for being named the 2020 Michigan School Band Orchestra Association Teacher of the Year for Band.

Each year the MSBOA names a Teacher of the Year for Band and a Teacher of the Year for Orchestra. Each of the MSBOA districts nominate a candidate in each classification. The executive board reviews all of the candidates and selects up to three in each area to submit to the active members of the association, who then vote on a winner.

"It's overwhelming," Mack said. "It's always nice to be recognized, but to be recognized by your fellow band directors is huge."

Mack found out she earned the honor last school year, but the official presentation of the award had to be delayed.

"Traditionally the (MSBOA) state president or somebody from the state office would come and do that at a concert, but last year we didn't have any concerts of course, because of COVID," Mack said.

Presenting the award to Mack was MSBOA state president Greg Normandin, who went to great lengths to ensure Mack's wait could finally come to an end.

"Mr. Normandin came all the way from Detroit with his wife — on his wife's birthday — to come to Manistee," Mack said. "That says a lot and it means so much to me."

MAPS superintendent Ron Stoneman said Mack is very deserving of the honor.

"How exciting for Ms. Mack to be recognized for such a distinguished award," he said. "Since joining MAPS I've learned that she is highly revered by her peers and contributes so much back to her professional organization, the MSBOA. Ms. Mack also supports and mentors other directors in the area and across the state."

Stoneman said the district is lucky to have Mack on its staff.

"It certainly is a privilege to have Andrea's services here at MAPS. Her approach with students in her classes has been one of high expectations in an inclusive environment where students benefit from personal rapport and positive relationships," he said. "The band is truly a family and they are having a great time working together. With all of the challenges of this past year, it's been a bright spot to celebrate with Andrea this awesome professional accomplishment."

Mack said the band program's success cannot be attributed solely to her.

"Everybody who works here, from the secretaries, the custodians, the maintenance guys, the paraprofessionals, all the teachers, the administrators, the school board and the community — this is a team effort," she said. "We're doing this for the kids and everybody should be recognized."

The crowd gathered outside the Manistee Middle High School building Monday evening got to hear the fruits of Mack's labor as the Manistee High School jazz and symphonic bands, along with the eighth-grade band, put on a show featuring songs from Stevie Wonder, Larry Barton and the Harry Potter soundtrack.

Playing outdoors poses some challenges, as sheet music and gusts of wind don't go well together, but Mack said her students did a fine job adapting.

"I was proud of them for making it work outside," she said. "... They've been working hard and I'm glad everybody could come out to watch."

On Tuesday it was announced the Manistee High School and eighth-grade bands earned a rating of 1 for all performances at the MSBOA Virtual Band Festival.

"Students earn ratings from 1-4, with a 1 indicating a superior performance," Mack said.

MMHS principal Andrew Huber said the bands' consistent success at such events is a testament to Mack's teaching ability.

"Andrea has done an outstanding job with our students from the first day she arrived at our district, which is evidenced in the ongoing recognition our students receive for their performances," he said. "The consistent excellence of sound our bands produce at every grade level is impressive, and growth at every level is easily heard. Not only is she an excellent teacher, she also brings in outside instructors to work with small groups and stretch their skill set.

"What I've noticed is the musicianship and growth of our high school jazz band," Huber continued. "We have most of our regular band attending and seeking another experience with Andrea. In short, our kids love her. She's been a joy to have and we're lucky to have her in our schools."

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