

TAKING THE NEXT STEP



RUTH CAMPBELL | ODESSA AMERICAN

Members of the OHS band practice on the tarmac in the ECISD School Nutrition Department parking lot Tuesday. The band is 150 students strong with new Director Sonia Campos at the helm.

OHS band looking forward to new year

BY RUTH CAMPBELL
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Brand new Odessa High School Band Director Sonia Campos is hoping for a successful year.

Having started practice

July 25, Campos said she has 150 students so far. Summer band will end Monday with a 13-hour day. The OHS band goes through its paces in the parking lot of the Ector County ISD School Nutrition Department.

“We’re really excited that (the) kids are really buying into the system and they’re really committing themselves to showing up and just really pushing themselves to get themselves better each and every rep,” Campos

said.

“I’m really excited just to have the commitment level of the students. As a new director, you always fear that. That’s something that you always have in the back of your head,

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but it's definitely been a positive experience so far. We're just excited to showcase them here pretty quick," she added.

Campos replaces John Mayo who is now retired.

Jimmy Olague, assistant band director and percussion instructor, has stayed on the staff and Eric Montgomery, a Kentucky native, has been added.

"He's really bringing a lot to the table. He's been part of some marching band groups in the past and we're really excited to see what he can bring to us in West Texas," Campos said.

This is Campos' first year directing a high school band. She was previously at Crockett Middle School.

Their theme this year is "Red," a Latin tour around the world.

"It's just different. ... The whole marching band aspect, of course, but it's more about dealing with older students. They're really not that much different than middle school students. They want a lot of guidance; they want a lot of support and I'm willing to give that to them, so I'm excited to see what we can make happen," Campos said.

She added that she's expecting 50 to 100 students to join once the school year starts.

"A lot of our students travel during this time and coming on as a new director, I didn't have a lot of time to send out information or have contact information for all our students. ... I think next school year,

we're definitely going to see an (increase) in our summer band numbers. I'm really excited about that because we just need everybody here ... to learn what we have to learn together," Campos said.

OHS' first football game is at home Aug. 26 vs. Lubbock Monterrey.

"We still have time to get ourselves adjusted, acquainted and meet each other and start trusting each other. You have to build those relationships and we've been doing that quite well. Our students, like I said, have been ... working their butts off. ... They're trying to soak in all the new information and they're really buying into the new form of marching.

We're doing straight-leg marching this school year. The kids are really learning, especially my upperclassmen, that are used to something different. They've really come on board and are really buying into the system, so we're really excited about that. We're building fundamentals quite a bit right now and it's definitely paying dividends because our sound is continuously getting bigger and bigger ...," she added.

With straight-leg marching, you shouldn't see any bent legs going as the musicians move forward, Campos said.

"We're really excited to bring that to the table. It's just a different form and it's something that's being used widely across the state of Texas in competitive marching bands," she added.

This is a state competition year for OHS.

"State is always something that all bands

want to go for. My philosophy is to build the whole student through music education. If we do our jobs here in every practice, we should be rewarded with really great opportunities, and we're hoping that state will be one of those," she added.

Seventeen-year-old senior Aaron Ramirez is a drum major. He has been in band since sixth grade.

"I really enjoy being in my leadership position. I like to help people and I like seeing what's going on; seeing a problem that we have in the band and being able to fix it," Ramirez said.

He added that there is a lot of change in the group this year.

"But a lot of it is good change. I really think we're going to improve a lot this year and a lot of those changes are for the better," Ramirez said.

He added that he feels the band will get better as the year goes on.

Dianey Salgado, a 17-year-old senior, is the section leader for trumpets. She has been in band for seven years.

Salgado said she feels Campos is a good motivator.

"... We're definitely a lot smaller in numbers than the past couple of years, but the quantity doesn't matter; it's more ... the quality of the band," she said.

Creating bonds with her section is one of the things she enjoys about band.

But, "The games are one of my favorite things ever."

"I like being busy, so having that distraction for me is something really amazing for me," Salgado said.

Permian band looks forward to successful year

BY RUTH CAMPBELL
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Permian High School Director of Bands Jeff Whitaker knew he had a good group of musicians the first day of practice. He has just over 300 students this year, but expects that to increase after school starts.

“We started on July 25 and we had a great group of kids show up that day. You can tell on the first day what kind of team you’re going to have that year (or) at least kind of get a feel for what it’s going to be like. It was very positive from the first day,” Whitaker said Tuesday.

“Our officers have been

doing a tremendous job. We have about 45 on our leadership team and these are students that just choose to do extra — above and beyond. They have different duties and assignments that they do. They show up before the rest of the band does. They make sure everything’s ready to go. They have meetings and organize things, mainly to make life easier for the rest of us ...,” he added.

Whitaker said the freshman class is very strong, thanks to the middle school band directors who have done a great job.

“... Our goal is it doesn’t matter if you’re a freshman or a senior, we’re all

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Permian High School Band members practice on the blacktop outside the high school Tuesday. There are just over 300 members this year, but it will probably increase after school starts.

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on varsity for this season. We've all got to perform at a high level, so our number one goal is to take our new members and get them up to the level of the upperclassmen as soon as possible," Whitaker said.

Kinslea Blau, a 17-year-old senior, plays the mellophone and French horn and is a band captain this year.

She said summer band will run through Saturday and then they will start morning rehearsals.

Blau has been in band since sixth grade.

"I feel honored to get the responsibility to help be a part of leading this band," Blau said.

She added that there are a good number of freshmen this year. "But they're all really good and ready to learn," Blau said.

She added that she is anticipating the start of marching season.

"I'm so excited. This is my favorite time of the year and this year we have a great show to learn," Blau said.

Gilbert Flores, 17, is a senior trombone player this year. He has been in band through middle and high school. He is captain for equipment and a section leader.

"We get all these things set up before rehearsal even starts. We're usually the first people on the field ...," Flores said.

"... We make sure that everything is on the field perfectly," he added.

Flores said he likes the fact that his role helps everything run so much more smoothly and it allows directors not to worry about set ups.

He said this year's band is going to be great.

"They pick up so fast. It's going to be an amazing year," Flores added.

This being his last year, he's a little sad but he's going to leave the band and his section knowing what their expectations are for future years and hopefully they will carry on.

The theme of the show this year is Birds, Bees, Flowers, Trees, so it's a nature themed experience.

Whitaker said they start talking about what they're going to do before they even finish the previous year's show.

Their design team is led by BJ Brooks, who is the marching band director and professor at West Texas A&M University in Canyon.

"He has a team that he works with on the design side during what we would call the marching band off-season. They have put in a tremendous amount of hours and work," Whitaker said.

As ideas are fleshed out, they have ongoing conversations.

"We see what opportunities can be created through the design, mostly they do, and they get feedback from us ... It's pretty magical how it all happens. It's hard to explain because there are some things that they do that I am not aware of. And from my standpoint, they give us a great product. My part really starts when we meet with all the kids and we start teaching," Whitaker said.

He added that the band collaborates with the dance department for the Color Guard program.

"That takes a lot of stress off of us as music teachers when we have talented, educated folks teaching the dance program in addition to our band directors," Whitaker said.

He has added new staff members this year with Tyler Serrato and Daniel Ward. Trey Burns is returning.

John Carroll, who was associate director of bands at PHS, is now assistant band director at Monahans High School, and Lyndsay Eiben is now assistant band director at University of Texas Permian Basin.

New PHS choral director ready for new beginning

BY RUTH CAMPBELL
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Although she doesn't officially start until July 19, Laurie Alfred Wash is already hard at work as director of choirs at Permian High School preparing for the coming year.

Wash replaces Ken Sieloff who is returning to school for his master's degree at University of North Texas.

Previously, Wash was associate director of choirs at Legacy High School in

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>> ECISD Fine Arts:
tinyurl.com/bmr2th7r

>> Loyd Hawthorne:
tinyurl.com/v6drj7zr

Midland and has a long history in the music world of the Permian Basin.

Wash's father, the late Dr. Maurice Alfred, was a choral conductor at Odessa High School and Odessa

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Laurie Wash, new head choir director at Permian, poses for a photo at the piano in her office. She has many years of experience in the choral world of the Permian Basin.

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College. Her mother, the late Glenna Alfred, was a primary music teacher. They both graduated from Hardin-Simmons University.

Wash graduated from Hardin-Simmons, as well, with a bachelor of education, studying under Loyd Hawthorne.

She has been teaching publicly and privately for 34 years.

"... Therefore, I have been in this world for a very, very long time," Wash said.

She added that she started going to conventions at age 2. "... As an adult, I had been teaching voice and assisting with choirs and teaching, basically in the Dallas-Fort Worth area, in the Houston area and then here in Odessa," Wash said.

"In 2001, we came back to Odessa and Shawn Bell ... took me on to be one of their voice teachers for the students here. Then as

Shawn transitioned out, Dr. (Aaron) Hawley came in and so I was here with him at the school. In 2018, I believe it was, I moved over to Legacy and now I'm coming home, some people have said," Wash added.

Her husband, Jeff, was in the original Black Magic May show nearly 40 years ago.

They have three children and one grandchild. All of their children were all-state musicians, as was her husband.

"But to be here and carry on, for my father and for my parents and for all of the wonderful people that have poured into me during my life here — musically — it's really an incredible town out here in the middle of West Texas for music. It's just a wonderful, wonderful place," Wash said.

Wash said it is too early to say what new things she might want to implement while she's at PHS. The wisest thing to do at this point is watch.

"... The advantage is

that I have been around the program for a number of years. All three of my children went through the program under Dr. Hawley and Shawn Bell," she added.

She hopes to bring elements from every program she has been involved in.

"I am looking forward to being with the students to helping them to succeed ..." along with the directors already on staff, Wash said.

Hawley said they are super-excited to have Wash on board with the "wealth of wisdom that she brings from the choral world ... You're going to be a dynamic team."

Wash said she loves the traditions that have been established at PHS.

"We're a pretty tight-knit group just because of where we live. So in the choral world, we know each other; we work together. Ms. Wash is friends with Ms. (Ginger) Storey over at OHS, Mr. (Rob) Rodgers. It's a wonderful team that we have at ECISD all together," Hawley said.