



Fine arts students bring home the gold

w. Hillary Lindwall
News/Wire Editor

High school bands and orchestras from across the country traveled to Washington to participate. Each group played two to three pieces and were given scores by three judges. After each performance, a clinician critiqued and gave tips for a better performance.

"Four thousand students from across the country performed over a Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Our group performed at George Mason University on Sunday and then we attended a huge inaugural ball for the high school students where we received our

"There were two things about this trip that I thought were significant. One was musically, in that we were able to take our highest level orchestra and band and we were able to compete at a very high level," Katz said. "The other thing that I thought was really special was the inauguration itself. It was really a special occasion. Seeing the first African-American president sworn in, it was more than historic, it was a celebration. I think that being in Washington for this event was a once in a lifetime event."

Band director William Koch agreed.

"It was the right time," Koch said. "We had the right group, the right kids, the right reason, everything was right and it worked for us. I think that we are still feeling the effects of our accomplishments. I have never seen so much pride in the kids."

The band performed *Salvation is Created* by P.Tschesnokoff, *American Salute* by Morton Gould and *Vesuvius* by Frank Tichelli. Both directors chose music that displayed the versatility of which both groups are capable.

"The students were stellar. They played well, but we knew that we would when we left. We were good players before we decided to go. The kids have been working hard and we knew that we had a good group. Both groups have upgraded their performance levels to a higher standard because of this experience," Koch said.

Members of the band and orchestra were invited to the Niles Township school board meeting to be recognized for their accomplishments as well as the Lincolnwood board meeting.

"A lot of people seem to be taking a lot of pride in the fact that we were out there and that we did well. For me it was kind of a validation because we were chosen as the number one fine arts department in the nation, but what did we really have to back it up? We have great facilities and a great curriculum, but what made us really stand out? This entire experience was validation because it showed that we really do deserve that award," Koch said.

The Niles West symphonic orchestra and symphonic wind ensemble recently won nine music awards on their trip to Washington, D.C. at the Heritage Music Festival on Jan. 18, 2009.

Collectively, the Niles West band and orchestra swept the competition. The group won a total of nine awards including Outstanding Band and Outstanding Orchestra, Adjudicators Awards for both ensembles, Sweepstakes Trophies and Maestro Awards.

The Outstanding Band and Orchestra awards were rewarded to the highest scoring band and orchestra as the most outstanding groups at the festival. Adjudicators awards were given to those with an average combined score of 92 or higher. The winners of these awards are designated as "gold" division winners which allows them to perform at some of the most prestigious concert halls in the nation including Carnegie Hall in New York City. Sweepstakes Trophies were given to those who entered two or more instrumental groups. The winner of this award is the school that accumulates to highest number of points for their groups toward a perfect score of 200. Maestro Awards are given to individual musicians who display extraordinary musical ability. Among winners of this awards were senior alto saxophone player Stephen Small and the symphonic wind ensemble bassoon section including juniors Julie Schwenk and Colleen Galicia and senior Margeaux Lim.

"This Heritage Festival was centered around the inauguration of the President," orchestra director Steven Katz said. "They have a special one every four years dealing with the inauguration. Because of that it brings in a lot more groups and a higher level of orchestras, bands and choirs from across the country."



Niles West band and orchestra students won nine awards at the Heritage Music Festival in Washington, D.C.
Photo by Hillary Lindwall

awards from the competition," Katz said.

The orchestra performed the *Finale* from Symphony No. 25 by Mozart and selected movements from the *Nutcracker Suite* by Tchaikovsky including "the Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairies," "the Dance of the Mirlitons" and "Trepak."

Additionally, the students attended the historic inauguration of our nation's 44th President, Barack Obama.

Niles West alumna makes headlines once again

w. Uzma Ahmad
Editorials Editor

Niles West alum Jeanette Sliwinski, who in Oct. 2007 was convicted of reckless homicide, was released from prison last Oct. 3, after serving only 10 months in the Cook County Jail. Sliwinski had an original eight year sentence after killing three men in a car crash while attempting to commit suicide.

Across the school, both students and teachers expressed outrage for what they believe was an unjust release from prison.

"It was a terrible travesty of justice when I arrested [Sliwinski] because three people were dead; it was a travesty when [Sliwinski] did not get convicted of first degree murder, and it is an even bigger travesty that the judge sentenced her the way he did," security coordinator Brent Fowler said.

English teacher Dana DesJardins believes that the punishment of simply serving time in jail is not a sufficient solution to the problem.

"I believe that one thing that is missing from our 'justice system' is the concept of restitution...in terms of peoples' lives. Perhaps there could be some acts that [Sliwinski] should do

that will actually help her imagine what this family had gone through...and bring two parties together," DesJardins said.

Freshamm Michael Nissan believes that Sliwinski's release from jail is a threat to current drivers.

"Sliwinski's release is both unfair and dangerous, because she is too reckless to be on the street," Nissan said.

Fowler agrees that Sliwinski's punishment was too short.

"Based on the tarnish that she did, taking three peoples' lives, she should have served at least 30 years in the penitentiary at

bare, bare minimum," Fowler said.

Nissan also agreed that her punishment should have been perpetuated, claiming that "Sliwinski should be in jail for the rest of her life."

"Some drivers kill only one victim, and receive jail for life for that. She should receive life too. I do not believe that she received the punishment that she deserved," junior Kristin Koder

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Community mourns death of 219 employee

w. Hillary Lindwall
News/Wire Editor

The Niles West community recently mourned the death of maintenance mechanic Eddy Feldmann, who worked for the school for over a decade.

Feldmann was found dead in a mechanics room at Niles West during the afternoon of Wednesday, Feb. 18. The gymnasium was closed, but after-school activities continued on as scheduled.

"He was a hard-working, great guy. He was always the first one in line to tackle any problem that we faced," Assistant Principal of Operations Ryan McTague said. "Running this school is a massive project. He was such a dedicated person to the school; he kept it running flawlessly."

Fellow maintenance worker Don Karger agrees.

"We worked together side-by-side. I thought he was a very nice guy and a good worker. I will miss him," Karger said. "What I will miss the most about him is how we used to joke around a lot together. I will really miss our friendship."

In addition to those who have suffered a great personal loss, McTague clarifies that Feldmann's death is a great loss to the school community.

"We have lost someone with a profound sense of knowledge about what it takes to keep this building running," McTague said. "That is an awesome operation. We cannot immediately replace him because it was his experience with [Niles West's] building that helped us solve problems."

Principal Kaine Osburn released a statement the day following Feldmann's death.

"Eddy did die on school grounds, in a mechanical room inaccessible to students or the public. No student or community member came into contact with Eddy after his death," Osburn said.

Osburn emphasized that the school "continues to be a safe and secure place for parents to send their children every day, and we are making available counseling services to staff and students who might feel they need such services."

McTague agrees.

"We handled the situation very professionally," McTague said. "Our main concern is the safety and security of our students and faculty members. Only very few people were able to access the place where he was found. We handled it very quietly and quickly and no one was put in harm's way."

Feldmann's death was not only a communal loss, but also a personal one for Osburn.

"When I came here as an Assistant Principal, I worked with Eddy a lot, more than most people anyway. I really enjoyed working with him because he was to the point, very knowledgeable and he had a very wry sense of humor," Osburn said. "He talked to me like a normal person, not like I was his boss. He certainly didn't talk to me like I knew more than he did because he knew way more than I did. It was the first time that I held that type of position, so Eddy really made my transition a lot easier. I am really grateful for it. He was just a really good guy."

Feldmann is survived by his wife, Ann, the social studies department secretary, and two daughters, Katie and Marissa.

Niles North student remembered

Niles North students, faculty and community members mourn death of Marie Dickinson, a 17 year-old junior, who passed away last Thursday, Feb. 19 after a short illness.

"She had an incredible passion for music, was good student and will be missed," North Principal Robert Freeman said.

Dickinson's sudden death had a profound impact on the North community, according to junior Meredith Naumiak.

"It was a sad day; most people were just going to the student commons," Naumiak said.

A memorial service was held in honor of Dickinson was held on Tuesday, Feb. 24, at St. Mary's Church in Evanston.