



# Without Music...

## life would be a mistake

It is constantly heard in our cars, headphones, and everywhere else we go. Music. For some we simply enjoy listening to the beat of the song, but for others it is a diehard passion. It is the backbone of their daily lives. The many sounds that are produced from the countless instruments are fuel to their fire. It has been a part of their daily lives ever since they can remember. It is what keeps them going. It is the center of their attention.

Music is the heart and soul for our band directors. It was their first love, their hobby, and their passion. Mr. *Scott Smith*, Mr. *Daniel Southerland*, and Mr. *Denny Whitley* have each had interesting back stories that brought them to where they are today. For one it was destiny that they ended up as a director. For another it was love from the beginning. Then for the last one it was all they had ever been surrounded with growing up sparked a flame. Whatever their stories were, the main thing they have in common now is their true love for music and watching students grow through music.

"Music has always been a part of my life," Band Director, Mr. Denny Whitley said. "I really enjoyed being in high school band and playing music."

Mr. Whitley has had a love for music for as long as he can remember. His high school days in band were revolved around the alto saxophone, but now he is solely focused on the experience of getting to watch most students grow over their seven year band career with him.

"In high school I played the alto saxophone because my sister played it so my mother did not have to buy another instrument," Whitley said. "While I still enjoy the saxophone today, most of my pleasure from music comes from my forty-five years of helping students master the art of music."

Mr. Whitley enjoyed him time in high school band so much that he designed his route through college to be a music director.

"My high school band was very small so everyone in it had a very important role," Whitley said. "My band director allowed me to do some of his duties to help him out such as minor horn repair, conducting and even writing a halftime drill. When it came time to go to college, I knew exactly what I wanted to do."

While Mr. Whitley always knew exactly what he wanted to do with music, Mr. Smith had quite a different path that finally ended up with

him being a director.

"I didn't really have an interest in music," Band Director, Mr. Scott Smith said. "My parents signed me up for piano lessons in the third grade and I hated to practice. My first realization that music could be fun was in the sixth grade when I won my first chair test."

From the sixth grade moving forward, Mr. Smith love for music continue to grow. Even with the growing love of music he was still very determined to not become a music director. "At first I was determined not to become a director," Smith said. "My family is full of directors. I was stubborn and determined not to listen to everyone telling me that it was my destiny to be a director as well."

Mr. Smith had a short affair with computers through college, but his love for music brought him back and he could not break the streak of directors in his family. "I started off at TJC and was very involved with music," Smith said. "Once I had my basics out of the way I headed to Texas State and had a major of computer science. Once my bank account dripped dry, I came back to UT Tyler and started working towards a music education major. I enjoyed music way too much to stay away."

Last but not least, Mr. Southerland. His impressive high school band career left not a doubt in his mind on what he wanted to do in college and life after. Being a band director was his calling from the beginning.

"I had a wonderful high school band experience," Band Director, Mr. Daniel Southerland said. "The Canton high school band allowed me to compete and have success. It also allowed me to travel all over the world. I will never forget my days there."

While the experiences in his high school band furthered his love for music, it was his director that made an impact on him and convinced him to be a director.

"At Canton, I was under the direction of Mr. Toups," Southerland said. "His constant drive and determination to make us better through music was something I will never forget. He showed me that I wanted to also teach students about life through music."

Mr. Southerland's decision to become a band director has left him with no regrets in life as he has done it for over a decade now.

"My experience as a director has been great," Southerland said. "I have had the privilege of working with some talented individuals over the years. I would not trade any second of the past ten years for anything."

While the trio of band directors all had different backgrounds to get them to where they are today, the major thing they have in common is their love of watching students grow through music. "We all enjoy the moments and times we get with every student," the trio of band directors said. "It is a very rewarding feeling watching the students grow through music and how they use their teachings in band to guide them through life."

*Story By:* Landry Mayo

*Photo By:* Kaylee Williams