

Austin High band, drill team to perform at state championship

By Natalie Harms | October 28, 2014

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The
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Photo By Courtesy Austin High School

Austin High School Band and Angels dance team are headed to the University Interscholastic League State Championship in San Antonio on Saturday.

programs they were a few years ago - and that's exactly what band director **Bob Chreste** wanted when he first started directing the AHS band.

"When I first took over this program two years ago, I told the principal that my only competitive call coming in here, is that I want to get this program back to the state championships two years from now," Chreste said.

Chreste kept his promise, and this year the band is headed to the University Interscholastic League State Championship in San Antonio on Saturday for the first time since 2006.

As if preparing for the regional, area and now state competitions weren't enough, the band and the dance team have been performing at football games, practicing and also competing in other competitions.

For the second year in a row, the AHS Band and Angels Dance Team competed at the Lonestar Preview Marching Contest - but this time, they took home first place.

The win meant so much more to the band, after a huge transportation mishap that forced the 165-person band to cram their instruments on busses and parents' cars. They ended up leaving later than planned and left more than a dozen percussion instruments at home. Thankfully, other schools let AHS borrow their instruments when it came time for them to perform.

"After all of the problems and things that went wrong, seeing how the other programs helped us out, how the parents stepped up to drive everything up there, and how the kids maintained their composure for everything, was a really neat moment for our program," Chreste said.

The two groups also entered the "Most Spirited Marching Band in Houston" - a contest hosted by KHOU and Carnival Cruise - by submitting a three-minute video. The online voting has concluded and the groups should find out soon if they will get to perform as the winner in the first week of November.

Chreste said competing in corporate competitions like these is really important financially to these programs.

"I try to keep myself pretty connected and always looking around for different opportunities and thinking outside of the box to find ways to help fund our programs," he said.

Lilian Mason, who has been the dance team instructor for three years and is an AHS Angel alumna, said that - along with the band - the 51-person dance team finds this season incredibly hectic, but she tries to remind them to live in the moment.

"At this point in the year, everyone hits a wall; the kids are exhausted from their rigorous academic and extracurricular careers," Mason said. "We try to remind them to compartmentalize their lives. While they are at rehearsal or performances, they should be present and live in the moment."

"The experiences they have with this special group of people will never come again. They will only get a few chances to perform and do what they love together, so they should cherish each moment they have."

Mason said that the two programs inspire students to "Be Remembered" - a phrase that has motivated students for years. She said it's an important tradition that encourages students to add to the legacy of alumni who have left AHS.

"As their directors, we emphasize that the greatest reward they can ever receive is the feeling of pride, joy and accomplishment after working their hardest as a team," Mason said.

"The passion that makes up this program, both from the students and the directors, is insurmountable," Mason said.