

*“My hope is that every student who enters my class leaves a changed person, changed for the better, changed for good.”*

- Kevin Riehle



Choir director, Kevin Riehle, has been in charge of Taylor High School's choir program for the past eight years

# Mr. Riehle's Opus

Taylor High School choir director, Kevin Riehle, has shaped the minds and captured the hearts of students by showing them how to fall in love with music and life

Written by Krista Friedli | Select photography by Anetrius Wallace



Riehle directs Expressions, which is Taylor High School's top show choir

In 2008, Kevin Riehle began working at Taylor High School as the long-term sub. "I jumped in at the end of February and fell in love with the students, school, and the staff." He came in at a time when the choir program was struggling, and turned it into something to be proud of. In the past eight years at Taylor he has made a huge impact on his students. They are his legacy, and they too hope to make the same impact on others that he has made on them.

## Sharing His Passion

Katie Hines, a 2009 graduate, teaches elementary music and is the artistic assistant director of the Hill Country Youth Chorus. Hines is planning on starting a choir at the elementary school where she teaches. "If Mr. Riehle was able to come into our school, take a crumbling program, build it back up, and then make it something to be proud of, I figured I could start something new for my kids," she says. "I am

taking his passion and love for his art and sharing that with my own students. I hope that I can have an impact on one of my kids, just like he did for me."

## The Beauty of All Compositions

Taylor 2011 graduate, Myles Anderson, now known as "Stockz" in the music industry, is pursuing a singing and songwriting career in Los Angeles. He has appeared in a commercial series, on Houston's *CW39 News Fix* and *Sports RAPP Live*. Anderson took men's choir his junior year and ended up loving the class so much that he took it twice. "I took choir before high school, but never by choice," says Anderson. Riehle opened Anderson's eyes to a whole new depth of music. "He taught us to appreciate different genres of music and see the beauty in all compositions." Anderson left Riehle's class with a new sense of vocal confidence, and a transformed love for music. "He believed in me and told me I was capable. If I was never taught by Riehle I don't think my passion for music would be the same."

## He Pushed Me

Laura Smolik is pursuing her masters in music and studying vocal performance and opera. She also holds a Bachelor of Music from Southern Methodist University (SMU). During the end of Smolik's senior year she was auditioning for college voice programs, and Riehle was there for advice and encouragement. "He is the one who really pushed me to go to SMU. I learned so much about myself as a singer and a person in college," says Smolik. "His openness and willingness to help us grow not only as singers but also as people is something I will never forget."

## Following His Lead

Collin Friedli was very involved in choir all four years and played football until he was a junior. Riehle was always very encouraging of Friedli playing football, despite many calendar conflicts. "Saying that he impacted my life is in extreme understatement. Everything I thought I knew about music was seen through new eyes after him," says Friedli. "Kevin showed me a life path that was so rich and rewarding that I had no choice but to follow it." Friedli attends Texas State University and is a music studies major. "My sophomore year he stopped us in the middle of a song, and thanked us.

*"A heart is not judged by how much you love, but by how much you are loved by others. I think after seeing and hearing what everyone has to say about him, we know the kind of heart he has. A very special, rare one."*

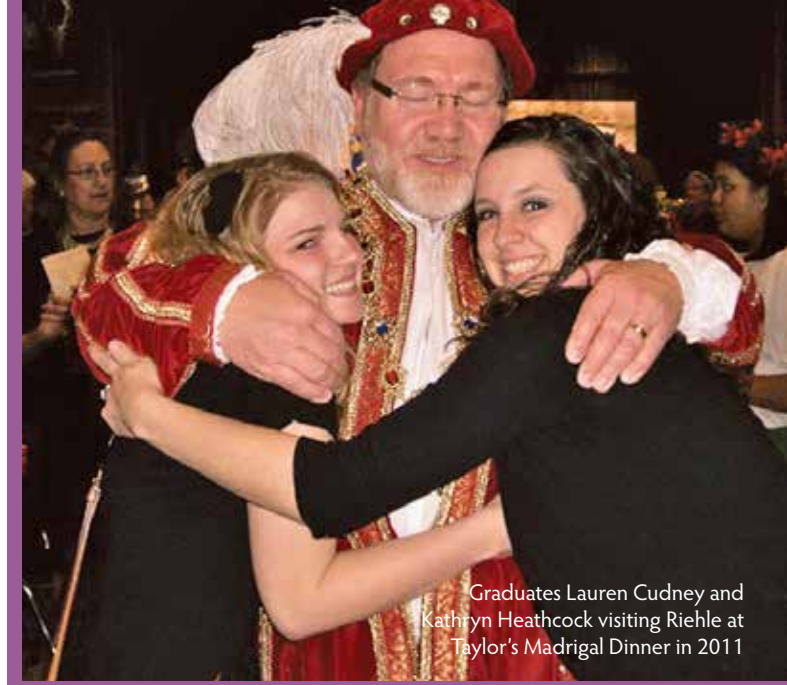
- Kathryn Heathcock

*"He kept us together and made a brotherhood between a room full of people who wouldn't have met outside of choir."*

- Myles Anderson

*"I doubted my place in the choir and my passion for music before Mr. Riehle became our director."*

- Katie Hines



Graduates Lauren Cudney and Kathryn Heathcock visiting Riehle at Taylor's Madrigal Dinner in 2011

He said, 'I get to wake up and be excited to go to work every day.' It was at that moment I knew I wanted to teach music."

## Takes the Cake

Robin Harwell says that she looks at "Papa Riehle" like a second dad. "I was able to go to him with anything," says Harwell. "Sometimes he comes out of his office dancing around like a maniac and sometimes he is sitting at the piano waiting for the class bell to ring so that he can read poetry." He puts his whole heart into his career. "When it comes to being a choral director, Mr. Riehle takes the cake." She believes that Riehle has shaped her into the person she is now. "If he had not been there to nurture me or give me standards as a musician, I don't know who I would be today."

## Handprints on Our Hearts

Kathryn Heathcock is a Texas State graduate and is working on her certification to become a music teacher. Riehle has always been open to new traditions and ideas and he listens to his students. Heathcock suggested the ongoing tradition of seniors painting their handprints on a wall in his office. "Mr. Riehle is able to look up and see all of the handprints he has left on students' hearts," she says. Heathcock is a changed person because of Riehle's guidance. "The qualities about me that grew after having Mr. Riehle have made up so much of who I am today. If I wouldn't have met him, there is no way I would be the same."

## Leaving a Legacy

He has impacted hundreds of students and has inspired many to pursue their love of music. "To lead a young person into a passion-filled career is without equal," says Riehle. He is at the point in his career where he has had the opportunity to see former students step into their own professions. "I am their greatest cheerleader and celebrate those victories and milestones with them; they are like my children who have gone out from the nest to soar into their own lives, where they too, will influence the next generation after them." **KM**



KRISTA FRIEDLI is a Taylor High School alumni who loved watching her little brother grow as a singer and a person under Kevin Riehle.

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