

Senior, Nicholas Rose, has been a drum major since his sophomore year at Morton Ranch High School

Katy PSP

MARCHING BANDS

Photo by Country Park Portraits

Written by Tonya Ellis | Select photography by Sara Isola



They're dedicated, conditioned, and hardworking. They endure full-day summer practices and perform regularly in the blazing sun wearing wool uniforms. Through it all these Katy ISD students are forever bonded as a team in the camaraderie of music.



Cinco Ranch band members pride themselves on creating a high-energy environment during games

After kick-off, the Katy Tiger Roarin' Band plays their "Train song" to get everyone excited

The color guard practices and performs with the marching bands throughout the season

We Are the Band

Each of Katy's seven high schools has 200 to 300 band members led by directors, drum majors, and student section leaders. The bands start training for their crowd-pleasing performances and competitions in three-week long summer camps. Sunscreen is as necessary as sheet music at band camp, which runs eight hours each day, and includes about four hours of marching in the Texas heat.

Seven Lakes High School (SLHS) junior, Lauren Ronaghan's favorite band memory happened her freshman year. "From the time we stepped onto the field with the bright stadium lights shining down on us, to hearing the first explosive note of *Romanesque* reverberate through the audience, to the triumph echoing in our last note, as the stadium leapt to its feet cheering. I truly realized that being in band was so much more than just playing an instrument and marching."

Musical Athletes

"The kids become very well-conditioned through the course of the fall marching band season," says David Reynolds, interim band director at SLHS. "We like to call them 'musical athletes.'" Songs and marching steps are taught at band camp, and peer leaders help each section perfect them. Once camp is over, students audition before the director to find their chair, or ranking, in their instrument section. "We try to group them by skill level so that they will have a more successful experience," Reynolds explains. During the fall season, band members are very busy, performing at games and competitions almost every weekend, with up to eight hours of rehearsal a week. If their football team makes it to state, the band goes with them. "It's a lot of work, but it's worth it," says Mayde Creek High School (MCHS) sophomore clarinet player, Sheila Montazedian.

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Competition Season

Toward late November, competition season begins. Band students participate in local, district, and sometimes state and national contests. "These students commit more time and travel than any organization in the school," says Ryan Pride, assistant band director at Katy High School (KHS).

"When football season ends, we don't get an off-season. A benefit to being in band is the opportunity to take sweet field trips," shares Emily Thrower, a recent KHS graduate and head drum major. "Throughout high school I had the opportunity to travel with friends to Disney World, Universal Studios, and Kemah Boardwalk. I got to play for a college basketball team and perform the national anthem for the Houston Texans."

More than Music

Being in the band teaches teens more than just how to make music. "You learn discipline, teamwork, perseverance, and dedication to your team," says Megan Rudolph, Cinco Ranch High School's assistant band director. "The students learn what it is like to achieve as a group, not as an individual," explains James Dolnik, head band director and chair of the Fine Arts Department at MCHS. "I have learned that in order to be successful as a group, you need to be there to guide each other," says Emily Laque, a junior tuba player at MCHS. "It's great to see a performance come together with so many people."



A Taylor JET band tradition is to chant the "Sprite Cheer" after their halftime performance

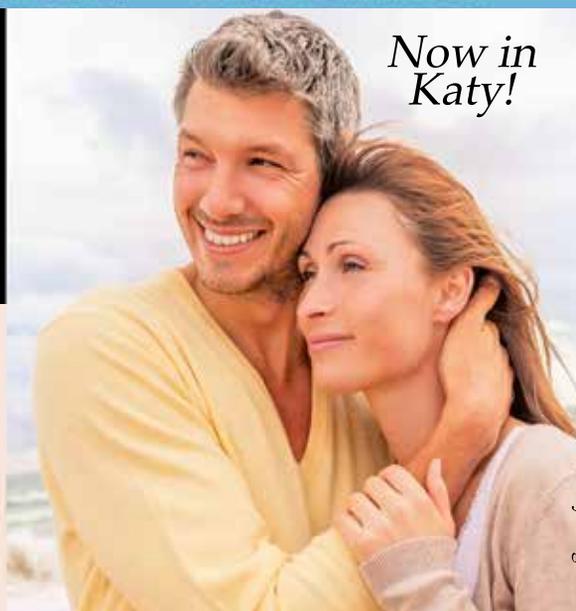
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Stephen Bond, the band director at Tompkins High School expresses the benefits to being in band, “Students are given an opportunity to express themselves musically, learn how to work as a team and hopefully become lifelong lovers of music. You have to be dedicated to be successful and you’re going to have to make sacrifices.”

Juggling Act

Juggling other responsibilities with band commitments can be difficult. “Incoming students should be prepared for the time commitment,” says Bryce Griffin, an SLHS graduate who played tenor saxophone and was band president for the 2015 to 2016 school year. “You can’t go halfway. During the fall, band consumes most of your free time. It definitely teaches you organization,” Bruce Melville, assistant band director at Taylor High School agrees. “It’s really a chance for all of our students to develop their individual leadership skills,” says Kyle Coleman, band director at Morton Ranch High School. “It’s a great chance to be in a group dynamic similar to being in a corporation. If they don’t do their part, it really does affect all the other students in the program. No other high school group develops student leadership to quite that level.”

Melville agrees that being in the band teaches students how to be organized. “We have fewer failures when the kids are busier. They are just doing more and keep track of their time better.” Lots of students juggle other sports along with their

studies. “We have a lot of kids who do a lot of stuff. We had two varsity football players, all-state cheerleaders, all-state track members, robotics team members, and also kids who work. They know how to manage what they’ve committed to,” says Rudolph.

We Are Family

Social activities organized by high school bands are numerous. “For a freshman coming in, they have 200 friends instantly,” describes Melville. “The most important thing I’ve gained has been the fantastic support and friendships from everyone here,” says Ronaghan. “All members are at different levels and are willing to help in any way they can, both in band and school.”

Hours spent on the field, in the stands, at competition, and in the band hall foster strong bonds between band members. “When you spend so much time as a band together, it becomes family,” adds Pride. Deep and lifelong friendships form, and many go on to play music with other musicians throughout their lives. **KM**



TONYA ELLIS does not play an instrument, but enjoys hearing her kids play saxophone, clarinet, and trumpet in band.

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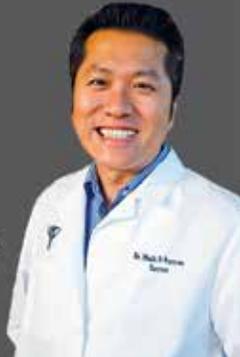


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BANDOLOGY BASICS



Mayde Creek band members say that putting in the work is worth it when you are on the field performing in front of an audience.

DRUM MAJORS

Student leaders that conduct the band at football games, pep rallies, and community events, and help run rehearsals.

DRILL INSTRUCTORS AND SECTION LEADERS

They are in charge of each music section: woodwinds, brass, and percussion.

DRUMLINE

A group that brings the “boom,” using percussion instruments like snare, tenors, and bass cymbals, as well as vibraphones and electronics.

COLOR GUARD

Dancers that perform with flags, fake rifles, and sabers, to provide visual excitement and add another dimension to the music.



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