

# Jared Stufft making music his career

By **MONIQUE DREW**  
*Sentinel reporter*

It runs through the family's blood — a love for music. One family member has chosen to take that love and one day teach others who share a similar love.

Jared Stufft, a senior at Mifflin County High School, says he grew up around music.

"My entire family is into music," Jared says.

Jared's father, Grant Stufft, played the saxophone in a polka band in high school. His mother, Carrie Stufft, a teacher at East Derry Elementary, sang and played the French horn in high school. His sister, Kristen Stufft, also sang and played the French horn in high school and currently plays the French horn at Penn State.

Following in the family's footsteps, Jared started his career in music taking piano lessons in kindergarten, but thought the lessons were boring so he quit.

When his sister joined the marching band, Jared says, he sat in the stands and watched the band play. Jared paid close attention to one section of the band.

"I always watched the drummers," he says. "They were the coolest."

Seeing those drummers started him on his musical journey. In fourth grade, Jared took percussion and saxophone lessons. This is where Jared remembers first making a connection with the music he was playing.

"I could kind of feel the emotions coming out of the music," he explains.

Continuing on through middle school, Jared played percussion in the marching band and in indoor drumline.

Although Jared really enjoyed band, he says back then he never thought of it as a career. With budget cuts in schools, especially to the arts program, he felt it wasn't looking good for the music industry, and neither did his parents.

"It was more of a hobby," he says.

Jared thought he would become a veterinarian like his father, and then a genetic engineer. Jared says he stuck



*Sentinel photos by MATT STRICKER*  
Jared Stufft, a student at Mifflin County High School, is a brilliant musician who wants to become a music teacher/professor.

music is sent to the school and students are responsible for learning the pieces prior to arriving at the festival.

Students would be judged on tone quality, rhythmic accuracy, musicianship, tuning and preparation for district band. Add diction to the list for district choir. After his audition was done, Jared says, for the entire week leading up to a concert, the students rehearse for 10 hours a day with the conductor.

Jared advanced to regionals in his sophomore year, making first-chair in the percussion section in district band. Out of 22 students, Jared made second chair as a bass for district choir.

Since students aren't allowed to audition their freshman year, Jared says his accomplishments were very impressive for a

sophomore.

Making a certain chair represented the student's placement in the concert. Jared was just two chairs shy of advancing to all-state in both ensembles. Although Jared did not make it to all-state his sophomore year, there was one good thing that came out of the experience.

"At regionals, I realized I wanted to pursue music as a career," he says.

The following year, Jared once again auditioned for district band and district choir, advancing to regionals in both. He then went on to qualify for all-state in district choir.

Jared made third chair, qualifying him for all-state choir. It was here that Jared gained the support of his parents.

Three hundred students di-

vided into eight sections of the area's best vocal musicians put on a concert at the chapel at Lancaster Bible College after a long week of rehearsing.

Jared says a personal connection is what has hooked him.

"Intimacy and chemistry between the performer and the audience," he says. "I love that personal connection."

Jared, now in his senior year, has one more shot at the festivals and said qualifying to all-state in both "would be icing on the cake." But his main goal is to go to all-state band.

"That's a big deal, at least for me it is," he says.

Jared grabbed first chair in district band and will participate in regionals at the end of February.

Finishing up his senior year with a full load of Advanced Placement courses, participation in the school band and choir, rehearsals and voice/piano lessons, Jared is preparing to audition for the music programs at Penn State and Mansfield universities. He has already been accepted academically into Mansfield and will audition for their music program near the end of this month. Jared has applied to Penn State, but has to audition first before he gets a response.

Jared aspires to become a choir director at the collegiate level.

"That would be ideal for me," he says.

"I want to be able to inspire people how I've been inspired."

Jared says his band director, Art Belfiore, and former choir director/vocal coach, Vicki Fensterbush, have been huge influences on him.

And there is one person, Jared says, who has been a huge motivation to him — his sister.

"She was always the better child academically, so I figured I could beat her with music ... and I did!"

Jared advises others seeking a career in music, first to be sure of it; don't let anyone stop you and just go for it.

"There's this quote," Jared says: "If you love what you do, you will never have to work a day in your life."