

Wieland recognized with NFHS Outstanding State Music Educator Award



Jen Wieland is a 26-year music educator in Red Lake Falls, Minn. In addition to teaching music at the K-12 levels, she is a music adjudicator, the Region 8A Music Consultant and member of the League's Music Advisory Committee.

Sharing the gift of music has been a lifelong passion of Red Lake Falls educator Jen Wieland.

As a youth, the seed was planted to perform and teach by her parents. Her mother played the piano and her father was a saxophone and clarinet player in a jazz band. She was involved in piano, band and choir throughout her high school experience and reveled in every minute of it. Wieland took piano lessons for 13 years and had voice lessons throughout her college days at Concordia (Moorhead).

“Music was, and still is my passion,” Wieland said.

That passion evolved into a 26-year teaching career in Red Lake Falls where Wieland has introduced music to K-12 students in the northwest portion of Greater Minnesota. What started as the first opportunity in her educational career has blossomed into a drive and commitment to provide the best music education and experience to students in a small, rural community. She does so with grace, enthusiasm and a spirit that all students should have the opportunity to experience the wonderful world of music.

Her tireless efforts recently drew national attention when the National Federation of State High School Associations recognized Wieland with the NFHS Outstanding State Music Educator Award for Minnesota.

“I am humbled and honored to be nominated for this award,” Wieland said. “I have a great passion for music and an even greater passion for educating our youth. I don’t teach for any accolades or awards, but teach because of how incredibly important music education is for the whole well-being of my students. In my career as a rural school music educator, I have had the privilege of working with some of the of the best colleagues, administration and students in northwestern Minnesota. I have the rare privilege of teaching my students for many years, some for as many as 13 years when I get them in kindergarten. It is so rewarding to watch them grow, change and become productive members of society. I like to think my music classes, instruction and care, played a small part in their upbringing. Being a music educator is the best job in the world!”

In the Red Lake Falls School District, Wieland splits her time with students between J.A. Hughes Elementary and Lafayette High School. Like her students, Wieland strives to learn and improve everyday as an educator. Her teaching schedule includes: Elementary General Music, Elementary Choir, Junior High Choir, High School Choir, Pop Choir, a Special Education Music Program and individual piano lessons for a student with Autism. She is also active musically at the community level in many roles.

The choirs she leads have earned Superior Ratings at every League Large Group Vocal Contest. About 90 percent of her vocal students have earned a Superior or Excellent rating at the League’s Vocal Solo and Vocal Ensemble contests the past 25 years.

“I teach my students that music is one subject that can be a part of your entire life,” she said. “I also feel that as a music educator, we need to be supportive of all students and their activities. The best way to advocate for your program is to genuinely show interest and involvement in other activities in your school.”

Wieland displays that by also serving as the Libero tracker for the volleyball team, the public address announcer for the softball team and as the drama director for the Red Lake Falls School District. In other leadership positions, she serves as the Region 8A Music Consultant and is an active member of the League's Music Advisory Committee.

"Her voice on behalf of the member schools in Greater Minnesota has led to a deeper understanding of challenges seen in rural areas as it relates to bringing music education to students," said Tim Leighton, the League's liaison to Music. "During the global pandemic when in-person contests went to a virtual format, it was Jen leading the way with a dedication to ensure that each student would have a memorable music experience during an uncertain time. Through Jen's legacy of service and daily commitment to enriching the lives of students with the gift of the music, it is rewarding to see her honored in this way."

The League congratulates Wieland on her national recognition and thanks her for bringing the gift of Music to her students, the community and the League's member schools.



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—Jen Wieland, Red Lake Falls

