

MECHANICSBURG AREA SCHOOLS



DANA FELTHAUSER, The Patriot-News

The Mechanicsburg Area Senior High School Color Guard placed fourth at the Winter Guard International Championships in Dayton, Ohio.

Many talents

Color guard makes splash after marching season, too

BY ROGER QUIGLEY
For The Patriot-News

At the head of every high school marching band, you'll find the color guard, a group of talented performers twirling flags and flashing sabers and rifles.

What you might not know is that they can do a lot more than you see.

After the marching band season ends, many of the color guards move indoors and begin taking part in competitions that showcase their abilities in dance, ballet and choreographed movement. Winter guard is performed in a gymnasium during the winter months to recorded music rather than a live band.

The winter guard competition is as fierce as many of the interscholastic sporting events at which bands perform.

It culminates in the Winter Guard International Championships, held last month in Dayton Ohio. And it was there that the Mechanicsburg Area High School team finished fourth in the second highest category, open class, putting it in the elite of color guard units in the country.

No other unit in the state came close to Mechanicsburg's finish. There were 45 units in the open class in which Mechanicsburg participated.

For its lofty achievement, the Mechanicsburg unit was bumped up to the highest category, where the competition is tougher.

"If they win, that's great, but we're just trying to get to the level where

"The qualities these 14 young women display are truly remarkable. ... [They] represent their school and community proudly."

KRISTY TEMPLIN
MECHANICSBURG'S COLOR GUARD COACH

we can be competitive with all the other programs in the country," said Dane Hildebrand, Mechanicsburg's band director. "They are performing at a level that is unbelievable."

The architect of Mechanicsburg's success is coach Kristy Templin, a 1993 Mechanicsburg graduate who is part den mother, part big sister and part role model to her team.

She can be stern, funny and supportive when each is needed, whatever it takes to get the job done.

Templin's philosophy is that the sport is more than just winning awards. It's learning teamwork, discipline and life lessons.

The girls have embraced that attitude as evidenced by the long hours they put in at practice and competitions. A typical week includes three-hour practices three days a week and as many as 10 hours on Saturday.

They also have emotional and financial support from parents; Templin estimates each family spent about \$1,200 this year for costumes and other costs.

Props such as batons, rifles and flags are used during performances. Judges score the teams on how well they use equipment, body and movement and how well the music match-

es the performance.

The team has only 1 minute to drag out their equipment and a 500-pound tarp on which they perform. They also have the same amount of time to pack up their set. Their show, "Autumn End," was 5 minutes and 45 seconds long.

"You better be pretty organized," Templin said.

"The qualities these 14 young women display are truly remarkable. ... [They] represent their school and community proudly," Templin said."

While the excitement of performing and competing might draw students to join the marching arts program at Mechanicsburg, it's the relationships and life lessons that keep them coming back year after year," she said.

Mechanicsburg's color guard team is made up of seniors Kylee Johnson, Alysha Naugle, Caitlyn Roemer and Jen Hilbish; and underclassmen Abbye Palmer, Kirsten Shatzer, Kristine Alford, Gia Lovari, Nikki Martin, Jess Guest, Katelyn Baer, Shawnice Tucker, Katie Hassinger and Alissa Hamar.

Templin's staff includes Joe Heining, Jeff Kahley, Jude Boughton and her father, Rich Templin, who does much of the choreography.