

"It's the Extras that Make Curriculum So Great"

by *Howard Crouse, Superintendent*

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The fine arts are an integral part of the fabric of Indian Prairie. Their importance is supported and celebrated at every level. At the middle and high school level, at least one-third of our students are involved in activities ranging from band, chorus and orchestra to theater productions, dance troupes, and speech teams.

Our students not only participate, but they excel in the arts. In the last month, the Grammy Foundation recognized both high schools as being among the top 40 high school music programs in the country, with Neuqua Valley selected as having the best program nationwide. This is a tremendous honor for the district. As Charles Staley, music department chair at Neuqua Valley recently reminded all of us, the success of the high school fine arts program is highly dependent on a quality program at the elementary and middle school levels. The staffs at our elementary and middle schools deserve a great deal of credit for two award-winning high school programs.

In addition to success in music, our students were recently selected to compete at the national level of the Scholastic Arts Competition and a Waubonsie Valley student delivered the state championship performance for prose reading.

In the coming weeks, community members will have several opportunities to enjoy the many artistic talents of our students. The upcoming events provide a chance to see for yourself why the Grammy Foundation and others continue to recognize our students.

Next weekend the Indian Prairie Educational Foundation (IPEF) is presenting "Stars of the Valleys—A Celebration of the Performing Arts" on Saturday, April 16 at 7:30 p.m. in Neuqua Valley's auditorium. This special event will showcase the best of the performing arts from both Waubonsie Valley and Neuqua Valley High Schools.

The fifteen acts selected to perform went through an extensive audition process to provide our audience with a sample of the outstanding talent within our high schools. The diversity of sound and talent presented by students includes Marimba, tap dancing, opera, violin, jazz, modern dance, piano, and much more. This event is a fundraiser for the IPEF, whose mission is to enhance district programs, especially in the areas of fine arts, math and science.

Another glimpse into the arts is available through the district-wide Fine Arts Festival. Since 1986, the Fine Arts Festival has been held each May. This event has grown from a windblown tent in the Brookdale School parking lot to a full day of performances and exhibitions with participation from students at every grade level. This year, the event will be held at both high schools on May 21, from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. More than 20,000 pieces of artwork will be on display and visitors can enjoy 55 musical performances.

If you are looking for yet one more chance to enjoy a performance, both high schools are about to stage their musicals. Waubonsie Valley is presenting "Fiddler on the Roof" on May 5 – 7 and Neuqua Valley is doing "Damn Yankees" on April 29 – 30.

Although these are high school students, they perform at a level far beyond their years. The production values and special effects are also well beyond that of a typical high school performance. Recently, the "Wizard of Oz" featured on-stage pyrotechnics and flying monkeys and it literally rained on stage for "The Diviners."

I would encourage you to attend one of these events to experience for yourself the talents generously shared by our students. You will be amazed by what you see. Visit the district's web site, www.ipSD.org, for more information.