

Enriching lives through music

Hello ACB Members,

Hats off to three creative masterminds whose combined efforts enriched us at our 34th ACB Convention. To Art Himmelberger, ACB's President-Elect and 2012 ACB Convention Chairman (and to Marist College) for welcoming the ACB membership to Poughkeepsie, NY. To Dr. Virginia Allen for her skillful, enthusiastic leadership of the Convention Band..... and to keynoter Lt. Col. Alan Bonner for his enriching presentation, "Bridging the Gap". Hats off to all the bands that performed for us, their conductors, soloists and guest conductors.

These dedicated participants in our 2012 convention have brought me to the last of my presidential **MORE letters, "E - Enrichment"**. Enrichment is all about improving the quality of something. Outstanding clinics, concerts and camaraderie at this convention ***"enriched" our lives as listeners, performers and educators.***

Former MENC President June Hinckley lamented the tragedy when people fail to make music a vital component of life beyond the school years. Recognizing that the brain has a system of neural pathways that improve our general measure of intelligence and longevity, she encouraged educators to become as concerned about "community music" programs as they are about school music. She stressed the necessity of being more explicit about the long term benefits of music in order to ratchet up support for music in the school curriculum. Our focusing on learning and performing on a musical instrument, will improve our cognitive skills, our ability to acquire knowledge generally.

Dr Katrina McFerran, Melbourne Conservatory of Music, reminded us of the value of music in our lives. "Making music allows you to put your real self out there and be heard. Group music making is truly empowering and should be an essential part of the human experience," she said. "For those performing in community bands, making music has a stronger relationship to health than listening does and performing enables us to make stronger social connections."

In order to function optimally we need to nourish our brains with nutritious food. In his book, *Use Your Brain to Change Your Age: Secrets to Look, Feel, and Think Younger Every Day*, Dr. Daniel Amen states, "we must exercise and challenge our brains. Doing crossword puzzles are great but not enough, **we need to stimulate our memories.**" New music challenges our brains. Every time we learn a new rhythm pattern we challenge our brain and when we memorize the passage it increases our brain circuitry to a higher level.

Learning to play an instrument at any age does "beefs up" brain circuitry. According to the Society for Neuroscience, learning to play a musical instrument refines the entire neurological system. It demands precise movement of muscle groups and combinations of physical processes such as breathing, fingerings and articulations all at the same time.

..... And **you** probably thought you were spending two hours in rehearsals every week just for the fun of it!

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As musicians we are enriched when we focus attention, exercise discipline, and heighten all other areas of learning when we perform on our instruments. That is why I have chosen MORE: **M**embers, **O**utreach, **R**ecognition and **E**nrichment for advancing the Association of Concert Bands mission. We want to foster adult community bands to ensure that each musician who wishes to perform may have that opportunity; that every community may have the opportunity to take civic pride in its band; and citizens of the world community may enjoy live performances of band music.

I hope you all have an enjoyable summer and your life is enriched with many music-making opportunities.

Judy



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