

# Reunion...from Page 1A

collected Super 8 movies of band camps and performances throughout the Culpepper Years, as well as a CD of concert festival performances and a book entitled "Memories to Share."

In an emotional showing of appreciation, Larry and Marcie received two awards from those in attendance, honoring their commitment and dedication to the students whose lives they changed.

"We take this overdue opportunity to thank you both for your dedication to the students you served, and for making the Union County Band a source of pride in our community," read one of the plaques.

The Culpepper Years marked a special time in the history of the Union County Panther Band. From 1971 to 1979, Larry directed a band that he grew from just 15 members his first year to nearly 150 marching members when he and his wife left Union County to take over a family business.

During those years, Marcie was in charge of what her students called the "girlie groups," and she helped to shape the band's auxiliary units - the drill team, majorettes and flag corps - into powerhouse elements.

All told, the band went from a fledgling group with plenty of heart to a large group with plenty of heart and Superior ratings at festivals, and by 1979, nearly one in four students at the high school were in the band program.

The Culpeppers would eventually return to Union County after departing in 1979, as Larry took over Blairsville campus operations for North Georgia Technical College around 2000, and Marcie continued to develop her successful interior design business.

Leah Colwell Adams played xylophone in the band

and graduated in 1982. Earlier this year, in April, she and Marcie were going over some interior design ideas for her home when Marcie mentioned that Larry had turned 70 the previous November.

Reflecting on the swift nature of the passage of time, Adams approached friends and former bandmates Union County Probate Judge Dwain Brackett and Steven Efrid about the possibility of hosting a reunion, and from there a reunion planning committee was formed and expanded.

"We had this common goal of honoring Larry and Marcie," said Adams. "Even though they said this wasn't about them, this was very much about them. They taught us so many life lessons - teamwork and just the importance of being a family. Several people who have never been to their high school class reunion said that they would come to this reunion because we were a family in the band."

Nearly a third of the Culpepper Years band members attended, offering old friends a chance to catch up with each other and thank the Culpeppers for showing them how to be the best young men and women possible.

Panthers came from far and wide, as far as Maryland and Arkansas in the U.S., and one bandmate in particular flew in from her home abroad.

Tracey Webb-Kolbinger, who now lives in Germany, graduated UCHS in 1977 and played the clarinet and bassoon in the band, though she marched the glockenspiel, an instrument similar to the xylophone.

Today, Webb-Kolbinger stays musically active by directing two choirs near Freiburg in Germany, though her main job is as project assistant at the University Medical Center in Freiberg.



"It's hard to believe that we've all gotten older, because you still have them in your mind as younger," said Webb-Kolbinger. "But I recognize them - you see it in their eyes, and you go, hey, I know you."

Jennifer Knight Carmichael, drum major and head of the saxophone section before graduating in 1979, remembered Larry for always making her strive to be her best.

"He pushed us to do more than we ever thought we could, and he pushed us to be excellent at what we did," said Carmichael, who has re-

tired from a senior position in Homeland Security and lives in Maryland. "If your best wasn't hitting the mark, then you needed to work a little harder and do it again."

As a majorette and clarinet player in the concert band, Leyta Lance Jordan got the opportunity to work in depth with both Larry and Marcie.

"Marcie was really a task master and very tenacious," said Jordan. "What she taught me - both of them, really - was the value of hard work and dedication, and sticking to it and working hard for the best result and not just

giving up at, 'well, it's okay.'

"And that has really stayed with me throughout my life, because I've had some good success in business and other areas, and it's because I learned how to work hard and really stick to it, and to be dedicated and not give up. I learned that from them."

For Larry and Marcie, the event gave them a chance

to honor and visit with the men and women they helped to raise right alongside their own children. Scott and Jennifer, who also attended the reunion.

Looking back on those years and all of the Panther Band accomplishments during their tenure, Larry said it was less about them and more about the children.

"It was them - everything was perfect timing," said Larry. "Everything just gelled. They were very talented, correct work ethic. Just good kids. They weren't hard to discipline at all, they disciplined themselves. And they loved to make music. All that fell together. It wasn't that I was a great master at anything, I just happened to be at the right place at the right time."

After deciding as a group to hold another reunion in three years, the former bandmates, band booster parents and the Culpeppers joined Will and Emily Stafford, the current UCHS band director and his wife, for a tour of the new Union County Schools Fine Arts Center.



# Mancuso...from Page 1A

Virginia was its offensive style of play.

Richmond, currently the 22nd ranked team in the NCAA's Football Championship Subdivision (FCS) and the 2008 FCS National Champions, runs a spread offense, similar to the system that Mancuso runs for Union County Head Football Coach Brian Allison. However, one adjustment that must be made is - taking snaps under center instead of the shotgun formation that the Panthers run.

But when you ask No. 9 about becoming acclimated to the difference in styles, he has no worries and is eager to run the spread offense on Sat-

urdays.

"They are a Pro-I Spread, and the correlation between the two is similar," Mancuso said. "I believe I can go under center without any problems because our high school offense is the spread. I think making that adjustment will be easy for me."

When asked what attracts college coaches to his third-year starter at quarterback, Coach Allison provided an impressive list.

"I think his size, his arm strength, his accuracy, his demeanor, and he's got some speed," Allison said.

According to www.qb-hitlist.com, Mancuso is the

No. 1 Pro-Style quarterback in Georgia and No. 4 overall. And after picking up First Team All State honors as a junior, the 3-star recruit already holds the school record with 67 passing touchdowns. He recorded his 400th completion during a 38-6 victory at Andrews last week, and the week before, scored 7 touchdowns, with six coming through the air, as Union pulled away from Lumpkin County 51-28.

With close to 6,400 passing yards for his career, Mancuso is nearing Kolt Owenby's record of 7,046 yards through the air.

Mancuso's list of accolades on the gridiron go on forever, but on the baseball field, he's also the ace of the

Panthers' pitching staff, one of its leading power hitters, and received First Team All Region honors last year. When asked if he would ask permission from Coach Rocco to follow in the footsteps of Richmond alum Brian Jordan and star in two sports, Mancuso just laughed and said that currently his focus is football, but he would never rule out playing both sports.

As for the future, Mancuso commitment to Richmond is solid but will listen to other offers, should they arise.

"If anything else comes up, I will definitely take a look, but right now, it's Richmond."

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