WHS band members attend festival

BY DEBBIE HIGHTOWER

TRINITY — Five members of Wheatmore High School band were recently selected to attend the UNC-Wilmington Honor Band Festival Dec. 1-3.

Seniors Elliott Johnson, Jacob Longuillo, Larry Smith, Steven Davis and Rebecca Meier all named the festival as a worthwhile endeavor.

Band Director Jenny Beck said that in all 352 students were nominated from 47 North Carolina high schools. Early in the fall each of these submitted applications, with 202 making the final cut.

“They ask us to list their background, including what type of musical experiences they have had so far,” said Beck. “For our seniors who are interested in music as an educational pursuit or a career, there’s not always the opportunity to go to a lot of clinics. A lot of those kids want to do music in college, whether it’s performance, studio recording or music education.”

Prior to the clinic, Beck said her students practiced audition pieces for two bands, each with its own unique flavor. One of them is conducted by the director of bands at UNC-W John LaCognata and the other by a guest clinician from a state high school program.

“The directors choose pieces that they think will inspire and challenge the kids,” said Beck.

The first time they saw the musical piece they would perform on Saturday was Friday evening, which is a lot quicker than the weeks of practice spent in preparation for Wheatmore’s twice-yearly band concerts. In addition, each musician received individual instruction from UNC-W faculty and staff.

The five students who were selected are packed with talent, dedication and goals. Four of the five students were in Beck’s marching band leadership group. One wants to pursue music composition, Meier, Davis and Smith want to go into music education.

“Longuillo is interested in collegiate marching band and concert band.

Johnson is interested in recording composition, and very interested in how it looks, how it sounds, and how any technology can be used to make it sound better. He plans to pursue studies in the music industry in preparation to open his own company making percussion and practice items.

“I’m glad I got the chance to go to UNC Wilmington,” he said. “To me it was a great way to go ahead and be a part of the band there. I think it was a good experience.”

Meier, who plays flute and piccolo in the Wheatmore band, wants to double major in music performance and music education.

“Now I’m torn between going to Appalachian State and Wilmington,” she said. “They both have pretty good programs. I think having different and very challenging music was probably my favorite part, as well as being there with some pretty cool people.”

Following Monday’s concert, Beck said band members will throw themselves into preparation for musical pieces that will be played at a band concert March at Asheboro High School. Last year, Wheatmore Band received a superior rating.

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