

For Immediate Press Release
“Valley Regional High School Again Brings Home National Music Gold”

Valley Regional High School’s Music Program continued its tradition of performance excellence during the Heritage Music Festival on April 24 and 25th in Annapolis, MD. On Thursday, April 23rd, nearly one quarter of the student body, across all 4 grades, along with directors Laura Hilton and Kevin Lam, piano accompanist Meg Gister, school nurse Cynthia Dauplaise, chaperones and parents traveled over 600 miles to compete against 12 other schools from the eastern United States. The groups included the Valley Regional High School Madmen Chorus, Women’s Consort Chorus, The Madrigal Chorus, Concert Chorus, Percussion Ensemble, Jazz Band, and Concert Band. VRHS choral and band performing groups brought home every first place award they entered from the Heritage Festival event, the only nationally accredited music festival in the country.

The Valley Regional Music Department competed in division 2A (schools with a student population of 600-1200) and clearly impressed the judges with their amazing performances in each category.

- Junior *Colton Kinney* and Sophomore *Richard Pittsinger* were recipients of the *Maestro Award* for exceptional solo performance.
- *Jazz Band and Percussion Ensemble* won the *Adjudicators Trophy* (highest scoring overall).
- All three of our bands, *Concert, Jazz, and Percussion Ensemble* won the *Instrumental Sweepstakes Trophy* (highest overall instrumental score average).
- Collectively the students were honored with the *Festival Sweepstakes Trophy*, which is presented to the school earning the highest overall score and only eligible to schools entering both choral and instrumental competitions.

This is the second time the VRHS Music Program has earned this award, the first was during the Heritage Festival in Chicago, IL in 2013, the last time they participated in the program. In all, VRHS brought home 14 first place gold awards.

These results place Valley Regional High School’s music department as one of the top music programs in the country. Because of the number of awards, received Valley’s musical directors were presented with invitations to perform during 2016 at the Festival of Gold competition.

Event judges for the choral competition included -

- Dr. Bryce Hayes, conductor and professor of multiple choruses at James Madison University;
- Mr. Bill Evans, a veteran judge for the program for 14 years from the University of Maryland, and
- Dr. Aaron Smith, one of the nation’s youngest choral conductors, from the United States Naval Academy.

Instrumental judges for this year’s festival were -

- Dr. Dana Roethlisberger, Director of Bands at Towson University;
- Mr. Matthew Heist from Broadneck High School where he is the director of bands, and
- Mr. Anthony Maiello, professor of music at George Mason University.

In addition to the competition, the group also visited the Baltimore Aquarium, Arlington National Cemetery, and the U.S. Naval Academy. At the Academy, they were given a demonstration of the Chapel Organ, the largest draw-knob organ console in the world. Additional performance opportunities included, *The National Anthem* at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier by the *Concert Chorus* and two a cappella songs in the Naval Academy Chapel by *The Madrigal Chorus*. The students had the opportunity to listen to *The United States Naval Academy's Woman's Glee Club* and seniors *Indigo Carlson and Lily Anderson* were chosen to sing with them.

On Sunday evening, the champions were welcomed home with a lights and sirens escort and were greeted by *First Selectman Dick Smith of Deep River, First Selectman Ed Meehan of Chester, and Second Selectwoman Stacia Libby of Essex*, as well as hundreds of cheering family and friends.



VRHS Student Participants in the National Heritage Music Festival at Annapolis, MD

This month, “Valley Regional High School and John Winthrop Middle School Spring Festival Concerts and Art Shows” will be held at

- Valley Regional High School; 256 Kelsey Hill Road; Deep River, CT 06417
- Wednesday, May 13th, 6:30 pm Art Show, 7:00 pm Concert
Valley Regional High School Choral Director - Ms. Laura Hilton
Valley Regional High School Band Director - Mr. Kevin Lam
- John Winthrop Middle School; 1 Winthrop Road; Deep River, CT 06417
- Thursday, May 14th, 6:30 pm Art Show, 7:00 pm Concert
John Winthrop Middle School Band and Choral Director - Mrs. Laura Traver

Join us for two great concerts, art shows by our regionally and nationally recognized, *and award winning school choruses, bands, and artists*. It will be a great evening of local talented entertainment. “*Valley Regional and John Winthrop schools serve the Connecticut towns of Chester, Deep River, and Essex.*”

Our mission statement: Region 4 Music Boosters support and enrich the performing arts through increased communication, fundraising efforts, and enthusiastic parent and community involvement.

See Performing Arts Activities on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/groups/VRHS.MusicBoosters/>

See Band Activities on <http://vrhsband.weebly.com/>

Submitted by and Region IV Music Booster Public Relations Representatives: Ms. Jacquelynn Russo-Boudinot at 860-767-0580 jrussoboudinot@gmail.com and Mr. Scott Swartzell at 860-304-4553 scottzell@comcast.net.

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