



Patriot Press

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Saving the bells

1st year handbell choir places 2nd at nationals

by Connor D, senior

At the beginning of this 2018-19 school year, Mr. Probus, FBTA alumni, was asked to help revive the academy handbell choir. After a semester of practicing only twice a week, the handbell choir outdid themselves, placing 1st at both the regional and state competitions and advancing further on to the national competition at Bob Jones University, where they placed 2nd out of eleven schools.

“The goal was to be competitive at regionals, but ... I knew that I would always want to push everybody to maximize what they’re capable of,” said Mr. Probus, director.

Handbell practices started very early in the school year, with practices on Tuesdays and Fridays an hour before first period.

Despite the early time, the choir members were faithful to arrive to practices. Shortly after learning proper techniques for ringing the bells, the choir delved into more complicated techniques as practices continued. As the competition season came closer, the choir also met for many practices after school and church, as well.

“[The handbell choir] far exceeded my expectations,” said a pleased Mr. Probus following the final results.



Mr. Baldwin, director, and the 24-member FBTA choral group reassemble on stage after the ceremony for a group picture.



Mr. Probus, director, and the handbell choir show off their national trophy at the awards ceremony.

The handbell choir continues to meet twice a week, practicing and learning new pieces for upcoming events and the spring concert.

“I have a passion for handbells and I want to see other people share that passion,” said Mr. Probus. “Not only is it a fun instrument that we can play, it’s something that we can use in church, so it’s more than about just playing bells and playing songs. It’s also about serving the Lord.”

Big, bad wolf out of order

Overcoming all odds, readers’ theatre advances to nationals

by Hart Z, senior

The Readers’ Theatre team, led by Mrs. Darby, won 1st place at both regional and state competition, overcoming incredible odds and demonstrating the overwhelming dedication of the students.

“From the very beginning, I knew we had a group that blended and worked together, wonderfully,” said Mrs. Darby, coach. “We practiced a lot and were very confident about the regional competition.”

The six-member team performed an adaptation of *The Three Little Pigs* in ODACS competition this year. Despite accidentally skipping almost two pages of the script at regionals, God blessed that day with the win, and the team advanced to state. They continued to practice, but a few days before the competition, the Big Bad Wolf, Jayden L, fell sick and no one knew if he would be able to perform.

“I was really nervous for readers’ theatre,” said Julie U, senior and cast member. “Every other music category Jayden was in had



Readers’ Theatre pulls off two 1st places as they advance to national competition.

a backup plan to fill his role, but we didn’t.”

The night before state competition, Jayden sent a text that he was too sick to attend. Mrs. Darby began reworking the script so that Nathan Hernandez, senior narrator in the play, would take over the lines for the wolf, and Julie Upchurch would take the narrator lines. Fortunately, after practicing so much, the team already knew all the lines for each other.

“I was totally up for the challenge of learning his lines,” said Nathan H, senior, “I took my Political Science test that morning and then practiced with Mrs. Darby the rest of the time until our 3:30 p.m. performance.”

The rest of the cast members really wanted to quit, but after a rehearsal in the freezing wind outside, there was a glimmer of hope that it might not go as badly as once thought.

God was definitely testing their faith in this difficult moment. The performance was almost flawless. The room erupted into

Showtime

Fairfax choral group showcased at national competition in front of 3,000 people

by Caleb D, senior

The resolution and climax of the competition season here at Fairfax is the American Association of Christian Schools (AACS) National Fine Arts Competition in Greenville, SC, for Christian high school students across the nation.

Each year during the closing awards ceremony, the AACS officials choose a handful of performers to showcase their performance in front of the whole auditorium of people participating in the competition.

This year, our very own choral group of 24 students was selected for this honor and was able to sing in front of the entire congregation of the AACS competition during the awards ceremony. On top of that, the choral group placed 1st in its category and offered three points toward the Virginia total score in the competition. The state of Virginia went on to place 1st for the 17th time in a row in the annual competition.

“I was extremely happy,” said Bro. Baldwin, choir director. “After a disappointing loss at nationals last year, it was just satisfying to see all the hard work moving into this year and to see it all paying off. It was as if [the choir] told me that they wanted to work harder, and I knew going into competition they had. And I felt like, that if we were going to win, this was the year.”

Many students in the choir had never been showcased before at the event and were eager for the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

“I was so surprised!” said Hart Z, senior. “I wasn’t as nervous singing as I thought I

would be. I just kinda stood there and sang like usual.”

Fairfax hasn’t been showcased at the national competition for about seven years (or since 2012) making this opportunity even more special. Students will no doubt treasure this moment for years to come.

Regardless of the showcase and the 1st place finish, the competition was very close this year. Virginia only won by a slim margin of around eleven points, which is different than previous years. Next year, students across Virginia may have to step up their game in order to keep their 17 year-long streak from being lost (or conquered by other close states, such as South Carolina or Illinois).

“Next year, we’re losing a lot of seniors and a lot of voices with experience and range, but we have a lot of younger voices that are coming in with energy and enthusiasm, so the music is going to be just as challenging but more catered to younger voices,” said Bro. Baldwin looking toward next year.

The music department lately at FBTA is as strong as it has ever been. The dedication and devotion of the musicians, directors, and teachers keep the music top-notch, not only in competition, but also in concerts and other events that allow students to improve their musical talents.

Thanks to all who give their time into teaching the students about music and for efficiently honing their skills in that regard. It’s your dedication that brings out the best both musically and spiritually.

cheers at the end, and they won the state competition and advanced to nationals.

“I was really surprised at how smooth our performance was,” said Carson A, sophomore cast member. “If we won or not, I knew we still did our absolute best.”

“I was so proud of the team and would not exchange what happened for anything,” said Mrs. Darby. “God clearly showed us that he was with us, and just because an obstacle comes up, doesn’t mean you should quit.”



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