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# Dwight Tibbetts puts his all into band directing, music

 By **John Hale**

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AUGUSTA — Dwight Tibbetts has been a band director in Augusta schools for 27 years, but he says the music is just an excuse for him to help kids.

He began teaching when he was just 23 at [Cony High School](#) in 1980.

"I went down to build the program, basically," said Tibbetts.

After five years, he came to the conclusion that for the high school band to be successful, he would have to start teaching instrumental music to kids at a younger age.

So he moved down to Buker Middle School. He had a post at [Farrington Elementary School](#) all along. He stayed at Buker until three years ago, when Buker merged with Hodgkins and he became band director at Hodgkins.

"The high school job is for a young man because there's so many nights out," said Tibbetts, "with basketball games and football games. Teaching middle school has allowed me to play professionally which I couldn't do at the high school level."

Tibbetts played trumpet with the Manchester Brass for 10 years and four years ago, he formed the Downeast Brass quintet. The other members are Andy Forster, band director at Messalonskee High School, who plays trumpet; Dana Teboe of Brunswick, a well-known freelance trombone player; Loren Fields, band director at Lawrence High School, who plays French horn; and Mark Mumme, band director at Noble High School, who plays tuba.

The next concert for the Downeast Brass is Sunday, Feb. 11, at 2 p.m. at Jewett Hall at the [University of Maine at Augusta](#).

"We're very busy in the summertime," said Tibbetts of Downeast Brass. "We play weddings to parades to concerts in the park. It's a lot of fun. We play everything from



Dwight Tibbetts has been a band director in Augusta schools for 27 years. Currently, he is instrumental music director at [Hodgkins Middle School](#) and [Farrington Elementary School](#). He's also director of the professional Downeast Brass quintet. [JOHN HALE](#) PHOTO

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marches to Dixieland to classical.”

Tibbetts has composed a number of pieces of music for brass quintets.

“I’ve had 40 pieces published through Solid Brass Publishing,” he said. “It’s classical to pop to patriotic music.”

As the sound of basketballs boom overhead in Tibbetts’ tiny office at Hodgkins school, the 50-year-old band director says his band is too big for the middle school band room.

Twice a week, the 90 band members take two school buses over to [Cony High School](#) for rehearsals. Tibbetts’ time also is taken up with small group lessons for the concert band, jazz band and middle-school brass quintet. He’s also piano accompanist for the school chorus.

“We take the middle school band to Washington, D.C., every other year and we perform at locations such as the Capitol, the Lincoln Memorial and the Jefferson Memorial,” Tibbetts said. “We’ve made eight of those trips. David Dennett was very big in helping organize the trips. Other teachers and parents helped. It brings together so many aspects of what they experience.”

On alternate years, Tibbetts brings the band to an out-of-state band competition where the young musicians are graded and rated.

“One year we got the highest award of any band, so I know I’m doing things right,” said Tibbetts.

Tibbetts grew up on a dairy farm in Whitefield.

“I come from a long line of blue-collar, hardworking dairy farmers,” he said. “I would be a dairy farmer if it weren’t for music. Music chose me. My parents supported my dreams to be a music teacher.”

Tibbetts said he had five brothers and sisters and all of them got college degrees.

He recently earned his master’s degree in conducting from American Band College at the University of Southern Oregon in Ashland, Ore. The degree took Tibbett four summers of study plus some study during the school year.

Known for his enthusiasm in conducting youngsters, Tibbetts said, “I bring a lot to the classroom. I bring a lot to the kids. I found out you don’t teach music — you teach kids. Music is my excuse to help kids. I’m a team player. Not only do they have to be educated; they have to be entertained.”

Tibbetts said, “If you’re not sincere, they see right through you in a second. These kids are smart. You have to collaborate with the other teachers. If I was just teaching music, I’d be bored out of my tree. It’s a holistic approach to education. We’ve got to give them breakfast, lunch and hope they get supper.”

Tibbetts’ wife, Marianne, is also a music teacher, at Gilbert and [Lincoln elementary schools](#) in Augusta. They live in Windsor and have three children, Ben, a senior at [Erskine Academy](#) who plans to major in music composition in college; Donald, a sophomore at Erskine who plays in the band; and Chelsea, an eighth-grader at Windsor School who plays the oboe.

Tibbetts is chairman of the Windsor School Board and has served on the school board for 14 years. “Serving on the school board has helped me as a teacher because you get to see how the other side thinks,” he said.

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