

Thanking Ms. Preston

Ms. P opened Normal West High School as an original Wildcat in 1995, after doing work for Bands of America and teaching at Danville High School and Normal Community High School. She holds a Bachelor's Degree in Music Education from Northern Illinois University and a Master's Degree in Music Education from the University of Connecticut, where she studied under Gary Green, an icon in the tradition of American wind band. She consistently continued her education, participating in conducting workshops hosted by the University of Illinois, Illinois State University, and the Juilliard School, among others. Ms. Preston established the Normal West Band's signature sound and reputation for outstanding musicianship, which have been recognized nationally and internationally throughout her career.



Ms. Preston's former students are active performers, educators, composers, and music industry professionals who continue to bring music to life in their communities. She devoted her career to supporting generations of musicians as they found their future paths. Ms. Preston has been a friend and mentor to a number of music teachers who now impact the world of music education in schools all over the country.



During her time at Normal West, the Wind Ensemble performed in Orchestra Hall (home of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra), the Walt Disney Concert Hall (home of the L.A. Phil), Carnegie Hall (New York), and the Sydney Opera House (Australia). The Wind Ensemble was recognized as the Illinois SuperState Honor Band five times and performed at the Illinois Music Education Conference (All-State) three times. The Wind Ensemble was selected as an "Encore" Ensemble at the 2008 Chicago Heritage Festival of Gold (Orchestra Hall) and a "Command Performance" Ensemble at the 2015 Australia International Music Festival.

Under Ms. Preston's direction, the Normal West Marching Band and the Normal Marching Band performed in Illinois State Finals, Bands of America Regional Finals, Grand National Semifinals, the Fiesta Bowl and Sugar Bowl parades and band championships, the Chicago Thanksgiving Parade, and the Illinois State Fair Parade. The Normal West Marching Band was a Fiesta Bowl Parade Champion, Sugar Bowl Grand Champion, Greater St. Louis Marching Band Festival class champion, Bands of America Regional Class Champion, and Illinois State Class Champion. This past season, the Normal Marching Band was the 4A-6A Governor's Grand Champion at the Illinois Marching Band Championships. Both the NCWHS Marching Band and NMB earned Division I Ratings at Bands of America events.

Ms. Preston is an avid proponent of chamber music, and she regularly programs chamber opportunities for students. Under her leadership, Normal West chamber ensembles have performed at the Music For All Chamber Music National Festival and the Illinois Education Association Representative Assembly. The Flute Choir, Clarinet Choir, Saxophone Choir, and Brass Choir perform winter community outreach, and chamber ensembles from each band perform in the spring.

As a champion for student opportunities, Ms. Preston sponsored color guard, winter guard, juggling club, and water polo at various times during her career, filling needs created by student interest. She founded the Normal West Chapter of the Tri-M Music Honor Society, which became the Illinois Music Honor Society this year.



Ms. P was featured on the cover of School Band and Orchestra Magazine in October of 2009. She has been recognized with tens of Citations of Excellence from the National Band Association as well as a number of Teacher of the Year and Teacher Recognition Awards from the Normal West student council and future teachers' clubs. A number of Mayoral Proclamations have been issued in the Town of Normal and City of Bloomington, recognizing the accomplishments of Ms. Preston's ensembles. She led the Normal West Music Department as chairperson from 1995-2004 and was the Illinois Music Education Association District 3 Senior Band Representative from 2018-2021.

Ms. Preston's enthusiasm for new music led to a number of commissioned works, including

- *A Longford Legend* by Robert Sheldon, celebrating Normal West's opening in 1995-1996
- *Metroplex: Three Postcards from Manhattan* by Robert Sheldon, celebrating the Wind Ensemble's first performance in Carnegie Hall in 2005
- *A Road, A Path* by Roy Magnuson (2006)
- *And We'll All Go Together* by Roy Magnuson (2010)
- *With Every Sunrise* by Robert Sheldon, premiered in the Sydney Opera House in 2015
- *(peculiar) occurrences involving the amazing flying wizzbang time machine, vol. 1* for chamber winds, by Roy Magnuson (2017)
- *Kimohai Le'Ahi* by John Alan Carnahan, commissioned by World Projects for the Normal West Wind Ensemble's performance at the 2020 Pacific Basin Music Festival
- *I always want pancakes, especially with you*, transcribed for chamber winds by Danielle Fisher, 2022
- *The Brightest Star: A Fanfare for Tomorrow*, for the Millikin University Symphonic Wind Ensemble and Normal West Wind Ensemble brasses, by Kent Baker, 2022

Ms. Preston also supported new works as part of consortiums with composers such as David Gillingham, Harrison Collins, Todd Stalter, and James Syler. Additionally, she supported the commission of *Slow Your Roll* by Paul Baker for the Normal West Jazz Orchestra in 2019. Notably, Ms. Preston's work with composer Robert Sheldon led to the adoption of Normal West High School's Fight Song.

Ms. Preston has guest conducted the Bi-State Honor Band (SIUe), Illinois State University Junior High Band Camp, Western Illinois University High School Band Camp, the Olympia High School Band, the Heyworth High School Band, and the Miami Killian Senior High School Band (Florida).

Retirement cards and wishes can be mailed to Ryan Budzinski's attention:
Normal West High School
501 N. Parkside Road
Normal, IL 61761

A GoFundMe has been established to honor Ms. Preston's retirement at gofundme.com/lisapreston. Those who would prefer to donate by check may make checks payable to Unit 5 Music Parents or U5MP and mail them to Mr. Budzinski.



We thank Ms. Preston for decades of musical leadership, inspiration, guidance, passion, hard work, and love. Normal West and the lives of those who passed through the band room doors are better because of the impact you have made.



Bands
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