

# One Great Community Salutes

## *Chamber Champion*

### *Tom Walker*

This is a story that begins with a young boy and his Father tinkering around on an old upright Starr Piano that his Mother bought them for fun. Tom Walker and his father “spent hours seeing what they could do on that old piano”, as Tom remembers. Tom said he was about 6 when he first fell in love with music. His first instructional lessons began when he was an 8<sup>th</sup> grader when he took piano lessons from Mrs. Toschlog. From that point on Tom and music have been inseparable and he has shared his passion with students for years.

Tom first sought education at St. Meinrad College and where he majored History but kept up with his music as his Minor study. He realized after graduating from St. Meinrad that he wanted to continue to pursue music. He then headed to St. Joseph’s College where he completed his Bachelor’s degree in music. Since that time Tom also achieved a Master’s degree in Music, Art’s & Education from Ball State University.

It’s this love of music and passion for learning that Tom has shared with his students over the years. Tom will be retiring after 37 years with Northeastern Schools this spring. Tom was hired on with the Northeastern Team in 1973. He credits Mr. Crozier Franklin as someone who “encouraged and mentored him in music and elementary band directing.” And Mr. Wayne Brewer, Tom says, “Guided me in the art of being a good teacher”.

For Tom it was always about more than just the music. “It’s about the kids”, he said. His music shows over the years have been memorable for the students and families as demonstrated by an award recently given to him by his previous students. A culmination of literally hundreds of quotes placed in a handmade book naming him their “Hero” was presented to him at the recent Spring Concert at Northeastern Elementary School. Words in this book describing Tom are, “unwavering, contagious, favorite, friendly & motivational”. Christopher D. Whited wrote, “The world needs more teachers like him—inspiring, enthusiastic, creative and supportive of all students regardless of their level of interest or talent. Bless you Mr. Walker for your opus of work.”

Aside from teaching Tom has also enjoyed the privilege of playing with several groups and places in his career. Some recent notable moments for him were playing in 2009 for the State Holiday Dinner for Governor Daniels and the State Cabinet and the 2009 Jazz Festival here in Wayne County when he played with Randy Carmichael. From the classroom to the stage Tom Walker is a true Chamber Champion and is to be commended for his ability to share this passion with people of all ages in our community for so many years. It is Tom’s nature to credit and acknowledge others but as Sara Ruble Coyle said, “Mr. Walker, you will be remembered forever and thank you for your dedication, hard work and giving spirit”.