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Air Force Band Lands at Stanley

By Jean Follmer



The Air Force Band Quintet plays for the Stanley Middle School Band Photo Jean Follmer

Teichman., who added that he will miss Stanley Middle School Music Director Bob Athayde when he heads to Acalanes next year. "It's been a great experience because no one can match his (Athayde's) passion and level of enthusiasm," said Teichman.

Williams met Athayde at the Sitka Jazz Festival while stationed in Alaska. Athayde has performed and taught annually at the Sitka Jazz Festival for a decade now; he's scheduled to be there again February 2-4, 2010. Williams transferred to Travis Air Force Base a couple years ago and Athayde says he was thrilled to learn that the band played at schools. During the session, Athayde asked a student what her reaction was to sitting next to one of the Air Force Band members - what did she notice about his playing? The student replied she noticed that he played with a lot of confidence. In true Athayde style, he suggested that she do the same. "I invite you to play with reckless abandon," said Athayde.

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Stanley Middle School recently hosted the United States Air Force Band of the Golden West (Band) from Travis Air Force Base. The United States Air Force Band started in 1941 at Bolling Field in Washington, D.C. and the program has since grown to include twelve stateside and overseas Air Force bands and eleven Air National Guard bands. They travel and perform regularly for both military and public functions; a number of the Band members recently performed for military personnel based in Iraq and Afghanistan. The Band was clearly energized to be in the Stanley band room sitting amongst the students.

They played with Stanley's jazz band, cadet band and chorus and engaged the students in dialogue. Technical Sergeant Mike Williams, the musical director, loves to play for schools. "I joined the military to play jazz; that's what I did. I know it sounds like we're preaching a lot (about sticking with music) and we are." Woodwind Quintet bassoonist and Director of Operations, Master Sergeant Lezlee Masson, agreed, "With music getting cut a lot, it's so good to share our talents and encourage the students," said Masson. Student reactions were positive as well. "I enjoyed playing with them quite a bit. It was incredible to see how good they are; they really brought up the energy of the (Stanley) band," said 8th grade trombonist Ross