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Haven High School music teacher Scott Hay helps Zac Headings on a song during a vocal class for the Wildcat Singers on Wednesday. Hay has been selected for the National Federation of State High School Association's Outstanding Music Educator Award. Photo courtesy Travis Morissee/The Hutchinson News

By DARCY GRAY

- The Hutchinson News

HAVEN – The middle school and high school students who enter music teacher Scott Hay's classroom start humming an "E" note when the bell rings, and they continue until he thanks them, signaling the start of class.

The humming is a way for the students to focus, and it allows him to build a chord with the choir

or continue with ear-training exercises, explained Hay, who has been Haven USD 312's middle school and high school chorale music director for nearly 11 years.

The light-blue walls of Hay's classroom at Haven High School feature inspirational messages.

"If music be the food of Love, play on. – Shakespeare"

"Make effort. Not an excuse."

Several of Haven High School's Wildcat Singers agreed that Hay pushes them to do their best.

"He wants us to get better," senior Kayla England said.

"We're not OK with mediocrity," senior Zac Headings added as seniors Keri Kauffman and Kirsten Showalter nodded their heads in agreement.

Hay is receiving high honors for excellence in music education, the Kansas State High School Activities Association announced this week. He's been selected by the National Federation of State High School Association to be the state's 2013-14 Outstanding Music Educator Award recipient.

Only one music educator in each state receives the award each year, noted Haven USD 312 Superintendent Rick White.

KMEA and KSHSAA first chose three candidates from among the more than 1,000 music educators in Kansas, and after going through a detailed application process, Hay was chosen as Kansas' candidate and ultimately selected by the national association to receive the award, said Reggie Romine, KSHSAA assistant executive director.

The award is being announced in December's issue of the KSHSAA Journal.

Romine said the award is a great honor for the Haven school district and the state.

"We're really excited about Scott, and he's certainly been a strong leader in our state, for both KSHSAA and KMEA," Romine said. "He's a great candidate, a great teacher and a great educator."

"Mr. Hay has been an outstanding teacher and music director for us," White said. "However, all the work he does beyond the confines of Haven High School is what makes him so worthy of this award."

A Liberal native, Hay has been a music teacher for 27 years, including 12 years as a choral music director at Wichita's South High School and four years as a vocal music teacher at Curtis Middle School in Wichita.

He previously served as the South-Central KMEA district president for three years and the KSHSAA State Large Group Festival host manager nine years. He's currently a member of the KMEA/KSHSAA festival committee. Haven USD 312 students have performed in the State Large Group Festival every year Hay has been with the district.

"I just always wanted to be a teacher," Hay said, recalling how he grew up working in summer camps and vacation Bible school. "It's just something that's in my blood."

He remains a staunch advocate of music education, although he's seen changes over the years to graduation requirements that translated to fewer elective classes for students - and challenges for music education.

Students can be as book-smart as they want, but they also need to be able to use their right-brain – their creative side, Hay said.

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