

Treynor Vocal Music

Roger Jensen was the speaker at the Treynor Optimist Club on May 21. He is retiring after 33 years of teaching vocal music at Treynor. He said that during that time he had two opportunities to move to larger schools to teach, but turned them down.



Roger said he teaches that “Perseverance can be a great asset throughout life.” His philosophy has been to “work hard, be enthusiastic, and keep it fun.”

Roger was recruited to Treynor by Randy Donahue in 1983. He was working in Rockport, Missouri at the time. He also sang in a quartet for ten years.

When Roger started they were building the main part of the elementary building. He drove between the elementary and High School for 23 years. The first musical they produced was the Pajama Game, in the old gym.

All three of his children were born around music contests. Jennifer was born the Monday after Easter. He had just finished contests and spent a long day at church. For Amanda, Roger’s wife started contractions a month early when he was heading for the Christmas Concert on Dec 15. He called home when he got there and she said that the contractions had stopped. She was born a month later, on the Monday after the state contest for the Show Choir. Roger Jr. (RJ) was born the Saturday of a Large Group contest. The judges moved his group’s last performance to the beginning of their lunch break so he could get to Mercy Hospital for the birth.

Roger told some personal stories. He said he was really thankful for the moral support from the Treynor community during Jennifer’s two year battle with cancer. She had to get monthly treatments for two years.

When RJ was four years old he went with Roger to choir rehearsals and learned to sing the songs. By the time he was in 1st and 2nd grade he was suggesting ways for Roger to be more effective at directing. When RJ was 7 he went to the Wizard of Oz play and wouldn’t go near the person who played the wicked witch for the next year.

The music students took a lot of trips to Chicago to see music in action. The first trip they took was to Denver for three days. On one trip they went to Nashville, in the early 1990s. They purchased tickets far ahead of time, but didn’t know who would be

performing when they arrived. On the bus ride there they found out that they would see two newer country artists, Vince Gill and Garth Brooks.

In 1995 Roger switched from Show Choirs to Jazz Choirs. They qualified for state the first 9 years. They placed second in state in 2008 and won the championship in 2010.

In 1991 Roger assembled a group of 2nd through 5th graders for Elementary Singers. In 2006 when he moved into the High School and started the Elementary and Jr. High Festival with the director from Oakland. The first year they had 4-5 schools participate and about 75 youth. Now the festival averages 320 students and 800-1000 people attending.

Roger said that to be a great person you need to meet great people and read great books. He said having faith is the key. "There is something greater in ourselves' than what we think there is.