

# Band

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Jacobson said she felt centered during the set, despite the harrowing news.

“We were very present and put a lot of emotion into it,” she said. Along with her bandmates, Jacobson wanted this to be the best show possible.

Hayden Wrolstad, a senior trumpet player, said Schroeder would have been “elated” by the outcome.

“His impact isn’t big enough for words and I owe a lot, as the person I am today, to him,” Wrolstad said. “(From) coming in as a freshman as this annoying squeaky little kid that couldn’t stand still to what I am now, I owe it almost pretty much all to him.”

Band director Nathan Czech, who joined Milton’s marching band program in June, commended the student musicians for their composure and resiliency in preparation for the competition.

“They’ve really come together,” Czech said, adding that members of Milton’s community were “incredibly supportive” as well. “They take incredible pride in what they do.”

According to Czech, the band’s execution of its set, which Schroeder helped curate, would have made the former assistant director proud—especially the ballad “Sound of Silence.” He said the song had “a really powerful movement” in their repertoire.

“I think it’s even gotten stronger in light of just the emotional roller coaster,” Czech said the band experienced over the previous few days.

“In comparison to last night’s rehearsal, this was a great show,” he said. “I think John would have felt really great about this show.”

Meredith Lea Jacobson, KayLea’s mother, choked up while describing the courage it took for the students to decide to perform. She, too, felt Schroeder would have wanted the band to compete in his absence. As the band’s color guard instructor and a close friend of Schroeder’s for more than 26 years, Jacobson testified to her friend’s devotion to the marching band.

“He would have told them to get out and do their job, and that’s exactly what they did,” Jacobson said.

Schroeder’s son, Alex, fighting back tears, said, “They played with passion and that was one of his biggest things.”

Although Saturday’s third-place result was not the highest state ranking earned by Milton’s marching band—they placed second in 2019—Jacobson said it was their most emotional performance.

She said Schroeder was always more concerned with how passionate the performances were than any marks they received.

“He didn’t care what the judges said. All he wanted to do was feel the music,” she said, adding, “The marching band community lost a great man.”

Current and former band members reflected on Schroeder’s inspiring nature and how his passion imparted a love of music upon them they will carry on indefinitely.

“John (made) a huge impact in my life and he’s the one who got me started in drum line and loving drums and learning how to play them. He was a huge impact in my musical career,” Swanson said.

While Schroeder was not able to take in the competition and cheer on his band, his spirit and the impact he impressed upon others was apparent. Opposing fans from other high schools gave standing ovations. During Czech’s post-performance speech in the parking lot, there was not a dry eye in the crowd.

Schroeder will be remembered for having “the biggest heart” and his passion for working with the students knew no bounds, Czech said.



**Left:** Milton High School marching band director Nathan Czech speaks with his students after an emotional performance at the 36th annual State Marching Band Championships at Perkins Stadium on the UW-White-water campus on Saturday, Oct. 16.

**Below left and right:** Members of the Milton High School marching band and color guard perform during the state marching band championships.

**Photos by Anthony Wahl/ Adams Publishing Group**



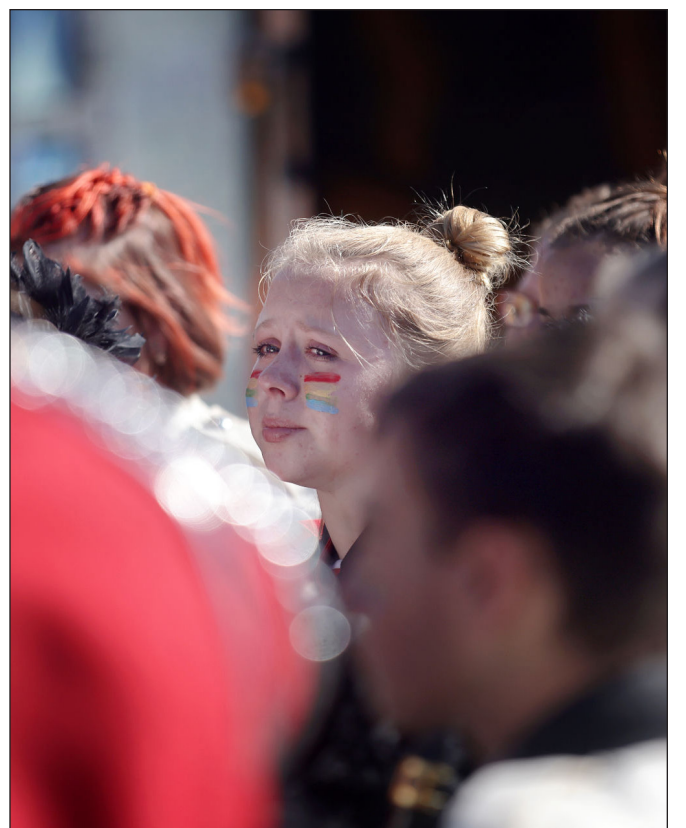
**Left:** Members of the Milton High School marching band get ready to perform.

**Below right:** Band members listen to director Nathan Czech speak after their emotional performance.



**Submitted photo**

John Schroeder, left, stands alongside his father Jack Schroeder, displaying awards for ‘Best in Class’ and ‘Best Performance’ after a competition in Indiana in 2019.



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