

Strike up the band



T-R/Robyn Martins

This summer Frederick Delphia (rear center), director of the Dominicc Greco Band, can count his granddaughter Jordan Wherley (front L), his grandson Tanner Wherley and his daughter, Carla Wherley, among the members of the community band. This photo was taken after a recent band rehearsal.

Musical talent? The Delphia family can't be beat

By ROBYN MARTINS

news@timesreporter.com

The Dominic Greco Band has begun its 2009 season with weekly rehearsals.

When director Frederick Delphia raises his baton for the downbeat and scans the room to make sure all eyes are on him, he sees nearly 80 area musicians ready to play – the same as any other year.

But this season, Delphia spots something new in the band room. He sees his family among the crowd. And it's then, he said, "To be quite frank, I just smile."

Delphia's daughter, Carla Wherley, sits in the front row playing the oboe. Her daughter Jordan, a freshman at New Philadelphia High, sits beside her playing the oboe as well. And her son Tanner, an 8th-grade student at Welty Middle School, has joined the percussion section this year as the youngest member of the group.

In this community band filled with music teachers, band directors and experienced adult musicians, it's unusual to find very many young students meeting the requirements for participation. They join with recommendations from their

teachers, and according to Delphia, the Wherley children have applied themselves and proven to be up to the task.

"I just regret that my mother isn't here to see them play," Delphia said.

His mother, Jean, was an accomplished violinist, music teacher and pianist. Music was part of her heritage as an ancestor had been a composer and the Army Band director in Rome in the 1800s. As the story goes, he once performed a clarinet solo for the queen and was given a prized ivory clarinet in response.

Delphia's father, Alfred, was an accomplished trumpet player who performed with big bands, even sitting in with the Glenn Miller Orchestra.

Delphia recalled that while growing up as an only child in such a musical home, he learned to play the clarinet, and he and his father would often play duets with his mother accompanying them on the piano.

After several years in the Navy and later graduating from college, Delphia became the band director at Dover High in 1966.

DELPHIA

CONTINUED FROM **PAGE C1**

"It was our whole life," said Wherley as she recalled how she and her sister, Dana, would take their batons to the practice field as children and play on the sidelines during band practices. They went with their father and mother, Carolyn, on all of the band trips, and their lives revolved around the program.

When Delphia's children were old enough to learn an instrument, it was assumed they would join the band. Dana chose to learn the clarinet with her father as inspiration. Carla chose the oboe.

After hearing the instrument, she "fell in love with the oboe," she recalled, and her father became her first music teacher.

Delphia was a strict teacher for the girls, Wherley said, and they each practiced an hour a day.

"It was that or do the dishes," she said.

When the family would visit their grandmother, they would often arrive prepared to perform.

"We would come with our instruments," Wherley remembered, "and she would call all of her friends, and we'd give concerts."

The Wherley children have grown up surrounded by the musical inspiration of their grandparents. Their mother said, "Their grandparents mean the world to them," and because of their influence, the children have been naturally attracted to music.

While Wherley helps her daughter by practicing the oboe with her, practice time in general is less regimented than when she was growing up because the children divide their time between more than one instrument. Besides the oboe, Jordan plays the flute and studies piano, and Tanner takes piano lessons along with playing in the Welty Middle School steel band. Their younger sister, Maddie, is following in her grandmother's footsteps and is interested in singing; and the 7-year-old twins, Gabe and Drew, are just about to begin piano lessons.

Both Jordan and Tanner intend to study music in college, and being in the Dominic Greco Band is one more experience for them as they carry on their family tradition. In the words of their grandfather, "It's a reward for me to have them."