

June 14, 2012

To Whom It May Concern,

It gives me great pleasure to write this letter in recommendation of my band director, Mr. Bill Vliek. For the past seven years, he has taught his students, as well as me, a great deal musically, but more importantly taught life lessons far beyond what any teacher is asked to do. To say that Mr. Vliek is a great band director is a grave understatement and would only be the surface of the category he fulfills. Whether it be his students or colleagues, anyone will attest that when it comes to Bill Vliek, he is a phenomenal role model, teacher, friend and human being. Simply put, Mr. Bill Vliek is the epitome of what a teacher should aspire to be and I have full confidence that he would be a remarkable Director of Bands in Fowlerville.

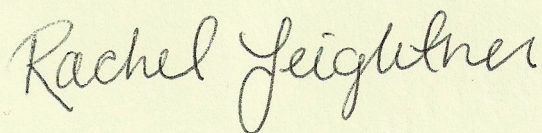
Seven years ago, Bill Vliek joined Springport School's teaching staff to take on the tedious task of rebuilding the Springport Spartan bands. At the time, seventeen high school members attended an optional band camp, and 13 sets of eager eyes stared at him from the 6th grade band room. To say that not much was expected from the bands performances would be accurate, however no one expected that in the next seven years, band in Springport would transform from a liability to an asset. Under the instruction of Mr. Vliek, Springport Bands are bigger and better than ever before. As a testament to the increased success of the band program, the high school band has performed at Albion and Olivet Colleges as well as Spring Arbor University and also taken a trip to Chicago to perform at the Vandercook College of Music. As for the Spartan Marching Band season, success has become a reoccurring standard. In addition to placing well at invitationals, Mr. Vliek has also redefined the idea of success. He strongly believes that the greatest success is not in the end product, but in the process of getting there. The band is now the largest student organization in Springport High School, because Mr. Vliek has found a way through communication, trust, and patience, to bring 52 students together for 50 minutes a day to exceed one common goal: We are not here to be good, we are here to be great.

Musically, our band is great. Mr. Vliek has done a spectacular job of teaching our students how to be a musician as well as how to think musically. That is what it takes to be a great band director. However, the lessons he teaches off the podium are what make him a tremendous teacher, friend and person. When Bill Vliek joined Springport, it was not only a turning point for the bands, but for the district as a whole. As his student, I believe Mr. Vliek's strongest and most incredible attribute is his ability and willingness to care for all students, but more significantly his driving

force to make them want to be better. Mr. Vliek finds the potential in his students and seeks ways to draw it out, regardless if it is musically or not. His ability to care for students is natural, but so is his desire for them to be extraordinary.

Now graduated, it is easy to reminisce about the greatest times I had in high school; where I was, who I was with, and what we were doing. Almost all of them are spent on a football field, or in a band room, with the amazing people I only spent 50 minutes a day with, enjoying the only thing we had in common. And it was only made possible because of the man who redefined what the band program was, rejuvenated the idea of passion and realized that the relationships we build with others, are the most imperative part of life. Mr. Vliek is nothing short of a phenomenal band director, but he is so much more. I will selfishly say that I want Mr. Vliek to remain in Springport forever because I want others, especially my younger siblings, to experience the impact he will have on them as individuals, as he has had on me. However, I know now that no matter where Mr. Vliek goes, the Springport Bands will continue to be amazing and find success because of the lessons and tools he has instilled in his students. I hope to not over step my means here, but to not hire Mr. Vliek as the new Director of Bands at Fowlerville High School, is saying no to an unbelievable opportunity. Giving him the opportunity to teach your students, is the opportunity to achieve greatness. Thank you for your time. If you have any further questions please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rachel Leightner". The ink is dark and the handwriting is fluid and personal.

Rachel Leightner
(517)414-5606
leightn2@msu.edu