

Tailoring Your Story for Print, Radio, and Broadcast - News Article

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Former students honor longtime band director Dr. Robert Hansbrough

On July 18, 2026, more than 60 former students gathered in Tallahassee to honor longtime band director Dr. Robert Hansbrough, celebrating the lasting impact he has had on their lives decades after leaving the classroom.

For 12 years, Dr. Hansbrough served as Director of Bands at Lincoln High School in Tallahassee, Florida. He is remembered not only for his musical instruction but also for the discipline, consistency, and mentorship he instilled in generations of students. During his tenure, he challenged students to strive for excellence while developing the leadership and character that many say shaped their lives long after graduation.

Among those reflecting on his legacy were Rebecca O'Hara and Dennis Pitchford, both former drum majors, former students of Dr. Hansbrough, and coordinators of the tribute event.

Pitchford credits Hansbrough with giving him opportunities that extended beyond music.

"I feel like he gave so much to me when I was in high school," Pitchford said. "He gave me a chance for leadership, a chance to grow. Not every teacher would do that."

O'Hara said Hansbrough's influence reached far beyond the band room.

"I was not the easiest kid—I was trouble," she said. "He turned me around and helped me get my priorities in line. I don't know where I would be today without that."

She added, "Bob never let you get away with doing less than what he knew you could do. I know this sounds corny—it was a royal pain, I won't lie—but it built character."

Former students traveled from across Florida, as well as Tennessee and New York, to attend the tribute. Pitchford said organizing the event proved to be easier than expected.

"It really wasn't that hard," he said. "All we had to do was put the word out on social media, and everything came together. The response was overwhelmingly enthusiastic."

For O'Hara, attending the event was about expressing gratitude she had carried for years.

"It's my chance to say thank you," she said. "Almost every person we heard from said the same thing."

Asked how it felt to be honored by so many former students, Hansbrough became emotional.

"It's hard to talk about," he said. "It's very touching. As you get older, you can't choke back your emotions the way you can when you're younger. When I see people who felt strongly enough to come to something like this, it warms an old man's heart and brings happy tears to my eyes."

When asked what he considers his proudest accomplishment, Hansbrough pointed not to awards or performances, but to the success of his former students.

"As a teacher, when you see your students become successful, that's the whole reason you go into education," he said. "The fact that it was music—that we learned together and depended on one another—made it even more meaningful. I'll say this in all humility: I was lucky to be at the schools where I taught. I was blessed with supportive communities and students who motivated me to do better, and I hope I did the same for them. When I see this, it all becomes real."

The reunion served not only as a celebration of Dr. Hansbrough's years at Lincoln High School but also as a testament to the lasting influence a dedicated teacher can have on generations of students.