



JUST ASKING

BY MARY KLEST

Question: Why are most BHS art teachers dual professionals working as artists and teachers?

I asked Band Director Randy Karon and Visual Arts teacher Scott Ziegler.

Randy and Scott are artists who teach full-time at Barrington High School. Randy learned to play all brass, woodwind, and percussion instruments during his college undergraduate program. His main instrument, which he's been playing and performing on for 35-plus years, is the trumpet. His first teachers were educators and professional musicians. "I know that influenced me early on as I was learning the fundamentals of music and brass playing. It showed me that you can enjoy being a musician on so many different levels."

Scott Ziegler was never encouraged to be an artist. He was a pre-med student when he decided to take a ceramics class to break up his course work in science and math. He fell in love. He was supporting himself through school, so believed the decision to follow his passion was his to make. He graduated with a bachelor's degree in art with a specialty in ceramics. For the next eight years, he worked as a toy designer refining his skills as a sculptor. He started teaching classes and then earned a master's degree in education, specializing in visual arts. "My students see me working as an artist during open lab on Wednesday nights and Saturday mornings. I see myself in them, totally enthralled with the material and process."

Randy says being a working musician allows him to understand what it takes to be a performer. "When I'm regularly being exposed to many of the same challenges that my high school students face as performers, I can give sound advice for performance."

As for staff camaraderie: "I think artists in general have an interesting perspective on life. Whenever I talk with another teacher artist, an unspoken understanding is shared," said Randy. Scott agrees. "We see ourselves as artists who teach art. I think it makes the program strong. We practice what we preach."

Both agree that their favorite part of teaching is witnessing that "aha" moment when a student connects with a subject. For Randy, it's when a student or an ensemble experiences the beauty and power of music. "There aren't many things that happen in life that can give you as much joy as when you are playing and performing music. It gives your life a certain balance that you can't experience in many other are-



TEACHER SCOTT ZIEGLER

PHOTO: SUSAN MCCONNELL



TEACHER RANDY KARON

PHOTO: MARY KLEST

nas." For Scott, it's seeing a student get immersed in hands-on work with the clay.

Being dual role professionals has its challenges. With studios at home and work, family life can get compressed. "There are times when I have to be pretty invisible at home, which is tough," said Randy. Scott says it's always a balancing act for him.

Rather than live as generalists, these teacher artists focus on a particular art form. They've sharpened their expertise through training, observation, and teaching. They are lifelong learners. "It would take three lifetimes to know all there is to know about clay," Scott said. With two jobs and one great love for art, these teachers are sharing more than content, they show context.