

Jennifer Mason

Class of 2003



Choir Director
Fall Creek School District
Fall Creek



EAU CLAIRE, Nov. 22— Belting out melodies into a hairbrush as a starry-eyed 5-year-old, Jennifer Mason discovered her talent for singing at a young age. Yet when the time came to finally set foot on UW-Eau Claire soil, Mason—like countless other incoming freshmen—was at a loss for choosing a major. On instinct, the Boyceville High School graduate decided to pursue a path of study that would support her passions best. After earning her degree in vocal education through Eau Claire's acclaimed music program, Mason soon found a position as the head choir director in Fall Creek. Finally able to live out the goals she had as a musical kindergartener, Mason is grateful for her experience at the university and cherishes the opportunities provided on the journey to her dream job.

How was the music program at UW-Eau Claire able to help you accomplish your career goals?: I had a wonderfully educational experience at UW-Eau Claire. The faculty seemed genuinely concerned with our abilities to apply what we were learning in the classroom with what we were doing outside of school. I loved all of the opportunities to get out into the schools, and the experiences with Concert Choir were the type that will stay with me forever.

Even though you have always enjoyed music and singing, did you always know you wanted to become a choir teacher? Did certain experiences or opportunities in college shape your direction of career?: When I went to register for college classes, I was undecided. I had it narrowed down to technical education, broadcast journalism, and vocal education. When I got to the front of the line I just blurted one out. Music education it was. Once I started singing in the choir and taking the music lessons and classes, there was no turning back. Music is so personal. I didn't feel the same way when I was sitting in math class or human sexual biology. I didn't put my whole self into every research paper I had to write. I put my whole self into the music I made. I loved every second of it! My friends often talk about what they would do if they weren't teaching. I can't think of any other job in the world that I would rather be doing.

During your time at UWEC, what experiences helped you prepare for your career as a choir teacher?: I was always in a choir. I took an extra semester of applied piano. I answered the calls of area teachers looking for help from college students. Also, I studied abroad in Scotland, which opened my eyes and heart to understand that everyone is different—and we are all the same. We all want to be loved, respected and be happy. As an educator, I remind myself of this daily.

What is the most valuable piece of advice you would give to someone trying to find success in your field?:

Get involved in everything! Volunteer with youth choirs. Get a church choir job. Get involved in the Big Brothers, Big Sisters program. Give voice lessons for free until you're good enough to charge. Then, get a job at a local studio or contact area high schools to see if you can give lessons after school. Every opportunity you have to interact with people in a "teaching" way will help

you develop into a better educator. Don't be afraid to ask your teaching cohorts if there's anything you can do outside of your regular placement. Many times there are lessons you could help with, musicals, extra show choir rehearsals, etc.

What has been the most rewarding aspect of your job?: Building relationships with students and their families. Many of my students I get to see on a daily basis for seven years. Not a lot of educators get to say that. I take my students on trips around the nation, and end up spending a lot of nights and weekends with them. I really get to know them, and they get to know me. Having this rapport with students allows our work time to be both efficient and really fun. I love my job. I get to laugh and smile and sing all day long!

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