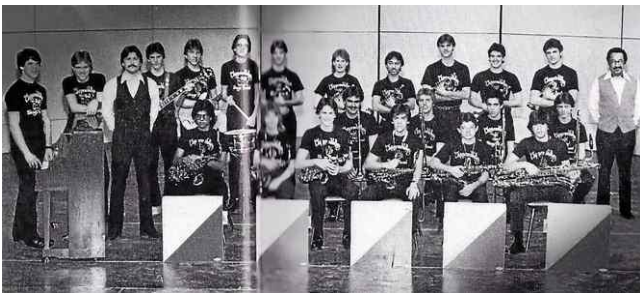


# CVHS jazz band alumni reunite to honor teachers

By Nicole Tuttle , For The Macomb Daily  
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Pictured left to right back row are Todd Belanger and Frank Schuster. Pictured Left to right front row are Craig Marshall, Anjan Shah and Gary Schodowski. These are some of the former jazz band members of Chippewa Valley High School from the late '70s and early '80s who are planning to reunite for a music video to honor their former band instructors and discuss the contribution music has made to their lives. Photo courtesy of ANJAN SHAH



The Chippewa Valley High School stage band in 1984. Some of the former students who were a part of the school's band in the 1970s and 1980s are reuniting to create a holiday music video to honor the music teachers who had an impact on their lives. Photo courtesy of ANJAN SHAH

Many members of the Chippewa Valley High School class of 1984 will turn 50 this year, a milestone that caused Anjan Shah to reflect on his high school career. One of his high school accomplishments was participating in jazz band.

“As I talked to several of the individuals, participating in this band was the one thing that we kept coming back to. It influenced on our careers, whether it was a music or non-music career,” Shah said.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Chippewa Valley High School's jazz band was under the direction of Ron Cardeccia, Bill Berndt and Jimmy Wilkins. These three instructors are currently retired, according to Shah.

“This particular band, Jim Wilkins had come in to teach in the late '70s and early '80s, so the folks that put the reunion band together are disciples or students of Jimmy, Ron and Bill from that period, the Chippewa Valley High School jazz band,” Shah said.

The jazz band performed at the Detroit-Montreux Jazz Festival in Detroit in 1983 and 1984, and earned many types of recognition and awards, including awards from the Detroit Chapter of the National Association for Jazz Education, according to Shah.

Shah said in the early part of his professional career he was a musician, and 15 years ago he moved into the corporate world and began an advertising agency. Traits that helped him do this such as perseverance, determination and attention to detail are things he attributes to his band experience. Shah currently lives in Baltimore but lived in Clinton Township during his high school years.

“I think it goes back to conversations we all had. We all hit 50 and reflected back and talked about all the different experiences that have shaped our lives to this point. And the common thread for all of us came back to our music experience... Many are not involved in music at all. Several are engineers in the auto industry, a couple of folks became medical professionals, a couple became architects as well as computer programmers,” Shah said. “With all of our different experiences and diverse schooling, we all had, each one of us came to the same realization, that music helped to shape our outlook.”

Members of the jazz band will reunite for a video, which will include interviews with members to discuss their experiences as part of the band and how it impacted their lives and careers. The video will further honor teachers Cardeccia, Wilkins and Berndt, featuring interviews with them as well. Shah said that many of his old bandmates contacted him through Facebook, indicating interest in picking up instruments again.

The video will also feature music, with many of the jazz band’s original members playing an especially created arrangement of “Frosty the Snowman.”

“We are going to have a series of rehearsals leading up to that,” Shah said.

The first rehearsal was held earlier this month.

“Then we will have a rehearsal once per month until October,” Shah said.

The rehearsals are important as they help refresh the memories of some former band members who have not played since high school, according to Shah.

“This has been again, a major reflection point at the age of 50, many of us have kids that are already graduating and college grads, and it is an opportunity to kind of do things we wish we could have done. I’m happy to say that all of the folks participating in the project kind of embraced this as, ‘I want to relearn how to play this, I had such a great time in high school playing, and now I have the time, the kids are kind of gone doing their own thing and now I have the time to revisit the things I really enjoy,’” Shah said.

The video will be released through YouTube in December and through [cvhsreunionband2016](#) on Facebook, according to Shah.

“We thought releasing the video during the holidays was the most appropriate, as it is a time of family and giving thanks. This project resonates on both of those pieces. These teachers became to a certain degree our family and we are giving thanks,” Shah said.

Shah has set up an Indiegogo page at [indiegogo.com/projects/music-teachers-that-we-love?fse\\_2=c#](https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/music-teachers-that-we-love?fse_2=c#/) to explain the video’s mission and raise funds to finance video-related expenses such as videography, recording studio and editing. Any funds raised beyond the necessary costs will be donated to the Chippewa Valley High School music program, according to the Indiegogo page. As of July 21, \$1,315 of the flexible \$5,000 goal was met, according to the Indiegogo page.