

From your Jr. High/Middle School R&R Chair: Kevin Sapp

What is Your Why?

Kevin Sapp is starting his twenty-first year as a choir director and teacher. A veteran of the USAF Band, Kevin enlisted in 1992 and joined the US Air Force Band Singing Sergeants. The USAF Band afforded many splendid opportunities, including performing throughout the United States in many prestigious concert halls. Kevin has shared the stage with many musical legends such as Jester Hairston, Lena Horne, Billy Taylor, as well as contemporary musical greats like Denyce Graves and Michael McDonald. In addition, Kevin has performed with “American Idol” winners Ruben Studdard and Taylor Hicks and pop stars Lee Ann Rimes and Chris Brown. In 2000, Kevin joined Fairfax County Public Schools as Director of Choirs at Mt. Vernon High School in Alexandria, VA where he taught Choir, Music Theory, IB Music, and Guitar. In the fall of 2006 Kevin moved to his current position as Directors of Choirs at Joyce Kilmer Middle School.

My Why

Even in the best of times, we sometimes struggle to get ourselves going. This Summer I, like others, sometimes found it difficult to get started with planning, choosing repertoire, and completing all the tasks associated with the start of a new school year. Also, having been separated from those like-minded hearts and souls that always helped me stay motivated, I found myself feeling drained and uninspired. And, in mid-August, with the start of school fast approaching, I was uninspired and unmotivated. I found myself simply going through the motions. However, I was recently reminded that sometimes we need to reflect on *why* we do what we do. Although I am not generally given to reflection, this has helped me to find a path to rekindle my enthusiasm. So, if you are finding it difficult to find your fire, I encourage you to try this. Ask yourself “What is *My Why*?” I hope that you did not find that too “preachy.” If you did, then maybe knowing more about me might help.

Much of my time as a youth was spent singing in and listening to church/gospel choirs. Growing up in the Dunbar Heights neighborhood of Ft. Myers, Florida, singing in church choirs was common. Most churches had four or five choirs, and, at my church, I sang in two. The entire community was steeped in church/gospel choir singing: every Sunday morning as well as at Wednesday evening rehearsals and monthly gatherings of church choirs (called Choir Unions) at churches throughout the community. There were separate events for youth choirs, men’s choirs, and adult mixed choirs. Clearly, my upbringing had instilled in me a great appreciation of the value of the choral singing tradition. I had been given a sense of the intrinsic value of choral singing, if not always a realization of the financial value. It was not until college that I became aware that one could be paid as soloist/section leader of a church choir.

I entered college as an engineering student; however, one of the first things I did upon arriving was to join the college gospel choir. Eventually, I changed my major to music and my world made sense all at once. Recent times have presented many roadblocks to the ability to collaborate with each other. As music teachers and choir directors our greatest resource is each other. Therefore, I hope to use this position to connect with colleagues and to promote the sharing of great ideas for new and innovative resources and repertoire.