



Take Note

## ST. AUGUSTINE SCHOOL FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

By Amanda LaConte

The **St. Augustine School for the Performing Arts** (SACSPA) is transforming the Ancient City one musical note at a time. The group combines private lessons at their six-studio location on San Marco with outreach programs for underserved groups of children and seniors in the St. Augustine community.

Under the leadership of Executive Director and Founder, Annette Danielson, SACSPA volunteers orchestrate programs like a choir of senior citizens from Coquina Crossing and students at the THE PLAYERS Championship Boys & Girls Club on West King Street. "I couldn't believe how wonderful it was to bring those two groups together," said Annette. "The kids just soaked up all that grandparent love."

Support for SACSPA comes from grants, donations, and fundraisers like their annual "Dancing Stars of St. Johns County" program. Professional musicians offer paid tutoring sessions in guitar, violin, piano, voice, and more at the SACSPA studio. A portion of the lesson fees support the school's community outreach.

[www.sacspsa.org](http://www.sacspsa.org)



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Long Story Short

## STEVE MARR

Through his mother's influence, the art of music tickled the youthful ear of Steve Marr, and by 16, he had already mastered piano, clarinet, and the saxophone.

By Meeka Anne | Photography by Rob Futrell

**A**fter Steve's high-school years ended, a two-digit draft number (65) foreshadowed his future. "I was going in the army one way or the other," he said. "Playing clarinet made a lot more sense than becoming an infantryman and going to Vietnam, so I joined in 1971."

This journey with the army lasted four years and included traveling with the 74th Army Band throughout Europe to Germany, France, the Netherlands, and Belgium. Recently married, he and his wife Marcia survived these years sparingly with no phone, television, or automobile. Steve said, "It was quite the bonding experience for us – and we're still married after 44 years."

Years later, in 2001, a peer (Glen Saltamachia) offered Steve a seat playing clarinet in the pit orchestra for "Oklahoma." The performance reignited Steve's musical passion and prompted him to return to studying music. Now he has four degrees, including a Masters in Music from Southern Illinois University Edwardsville. During these academic years, he taught private lessons and opened a studio. After receiving his Master's Degree, he moved on to teaching music at two Illinois colleges.

Talking about retirement, Steve laughed and said, "This is amusing as my wife and I both

know you never really retire from music." In 2015 Steve and Marcia attempted retirement and began traveling in their RV. However, before they left, Steve accepted an offer from the **St. Augustine Youth Orchestra** (SAYO) for the position of Artistic Director/Conductor. He led his first rehearsal three hours after arriving at the local campground.

Steve loves his position and says, "Teaching and working with students is both fun and rewarding, especially when you see a kid's 'learning light' is turned on and they get it. I love their smiles and listening to them progress each week."

"A considerable amount of my time," he says, "is spent making new contacts with band directors, musicians, and conductors. I also build the budget, and I am the Secretary." Research, as well, is part of the preparation for every performance and typically includes searching, listening to, and reviewing scores. The orchestra typically has three performances, plus a concert, during both the fall and spring semesters, so research is a significant part of the process.

Even through all this, the lifelong musician takes the time to pick up his clarinet and perform.

[www.staugyouthorch.org](http://www.staugyouthorch.org)