

# Sister enjoys opportunity to be God's instrument

Sister JoAnn Knaebel is flutist in local symphonic band

By **JOHN FRANKO**  
Staff Writer

When the North Pittsburgh Symphonic Band takes the stage, the unassuming flutist likes the fact that she doesn't stand out. School Sister of St. Francis JoAnn Knaebel is happy that she is "just one of the band."

"I love music," she said. "I sense my God in the music that I play."

Sister JoAnn has been a member of the band for 20 years and enjoys the camaraderie of being with other musicians who share her love for music. "I do my best, I don't throw anybody off," she said with a laugh.

A native of Arlington, Virginia,

Sister JoAnn studied music in college, but was led to the School Sisters of St. Francis when a friend professed to the order. She would go on to pursue nursing and become a licensed practical nurse. She also taught for a while.

Sister JoAnn rekindled her love of playing while serving in San Antonio, Texas, and was looking for an outlet to express it when she returned to Pittsburgh in the late 1990s. She loves different types of music, but particularly enjoys "brass choir" material. "It just announces the glory of God," she said.

Her favorite composers include Aaron Copland, Alfred Reed and John Williams. Like any instrument, Sister JoAnn noted, the flute allows God's spirit to work through her as a symbol of her spirituality.

"We started with the breath of God and the only way my flute speaks is through breath," she said.



PHOTO BY JOHN FRANKO

**Sister JoAnn Knaebel plays in the North Pittsburgh Symphonic Band.**

Sister JoAnn has been delighted that other members of her order have been able to attend her per-

formances, as well as her identical twin, Lynn, who occasionally comes up from Arlington. She also plays at liturgies at her motherhouse and at the order's Marian Hall Home. For a number of years, she played at liturgies at St. Alphonsus Parish in Wexford.

The North Pittsburgh Symphonic Band was founded in 1992 as the North Suburban Symphonic Band. It is a full symphonic band encompassing woodwinds, brass and percussion instruments.

Its approximately 75 members come from a variety of backgrounds. They include speech therapists, engineers, nurses, pharmacists, band directors, security consultants, restaurant managers, teachers, physicians, students and retired people. The band is under the direction of Dr. R. Tad Greig, director of instrumental activities and professor of music at Westminster College.

It presents four concerts a year. The band performed recently at North Hills Middle School in Ross Township, but its next performance is set for Sunday, May 6, at 3 p.m. at Ross Elementary School, 90 Houston Road, with a "Hoorah for Hollywood" theme.

Works to be performed will include the symphonic marches of Williams, Robert Jager's "Esprit de Corps," Richard Rodgers' "Victory at Sea," highlights from Disney's "Beauty and the Beast," Joseph Turrin's "Fandango" and a Henry Mancini spectacular. Tickets are \$8 or free with student ID. There are group and WQEI discounts. For information, visit [www.npsband.org](http://www.npsband.org).

The band also is scheduled to perform July 1 as part of the Bach Beethoven and Brunch classical musical series at Mellon Park in Pittsburgh's Shadyside and Point Breeze neighborhoods.