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## Ridgewood High School marching band director noted for success

**BY MATTHEW SCHNEIDER**

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RIDGEWOOD - The director of the Ridgewood High School (RHS) marching band was recently honored for his work and dedication as a role model and a coach, receiving a prestigious award.

John Luckenbill won the Positive Coaching Alliance's (PCA's) Double-Goal Coach Award.

"Mr. Luckenbill is one of 50 national recipients of the national non-profit organization's coveted award, presented to coaches who strive to win while also pursuing the more-important goal of teaching life lessons through sports," according to a release from the village's public schools. "He was nominated for the PCA award by a band parent who spearheaded the effort, gathering letters of recommendation and other required documentation."

The Double-Goal award includes a \$200 prize, certificate and national mention.

"It is a great honor to have won this award," Luckenbill said. "The importance of teaching life lessons is a key component of the award, and to know that what I do on a daily basis has made a positive impact on the lives of my students is truly rewarding."

Luckenbill also said that he is the only band director to win the award, which is something that he is "really proud of."

"Establishing a respectful, trusting and supportive environment for the students has been a key component to the success of the band," he said. "But the simple act of making sure that the students know that I care about them is really important to me."

Luckenbill, who started his work at RHS at the age of 22 and has been the band's director for five years, said that he knew he wanted to be a music teacher from a young age.

"Growing up in a family of musicians, I always knew that I wanted to pursue teaching music," he said. "As I played trumpet as a member of the Michigan State University Spartan Marching Band, I became enamored with the marching band activity and everything that it teaches students. Experiencing these life lessons first hand further motivated me to become a band director."

He also said that he could never have won the award without the support of the parents, the hard work of the students and the collaboration from the marching band staff.

"Students, parents and colleagues have been extremely gracious and supportive of me winning the award," he said "It's also been



PHOTO COURTESY OF JOSE COLLANTES

John Luckenbill leads the Ridgewood High School marching band at the July 4 parade. The band director earned national honors with the Positive Coaching Alliance's (PCA's) Double-Goal Coach Award.

great to receive congratulations and 'thank-yous' from former students and parents."

According to Luckenbill, the band did very well this year. It placed third in the USBands National Championship with awards for best music and best visual performance, while also taking first place at three USBands competitions, winning awards for best music, best visual performance, best percussion, best color guard and best overall effect.

"John helps his team win in competitions and in life," said Jim Thompson, PCA founder and CEO. "By creating a positive, character-building youth sports experience and serving as a Double-Goal Coach, John helps youth develop into better athletes and better people."

"The best part about directing the band is watching it grow from a group of individuals to a team throughout the season. By the end of the season, you begin to witness the band come together to be a part of something bigger than themselves," said Luckenbill.

He is thankful for his time at RHS and said, "I have been fortunate enough to be able to direct the band in Ridgewood for my entire career. The dedication of the students and the never-ending support of the parents helps to make the Ridgewood band program a special organization to be a part of."

When asked about all of the time he has given to the program, Luckenbill was modest, and said, "It's easy to be dedicated and put in many hours of work when you teach such a great group of students."

He added, "Seeing the students develop friendships and become a band family is one of the best parts of being the director."

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