

Wesleyan Wednesday



during one of the National Championship games!

Chris Tolliver '82

Our #WesleyanWednesday feature this week is Chris “Mr. T” Tolliver '82! Chris came to Wesleyan to double-major in music and music education from Carrollton, Ky. “I’d grown up in a small town, so the smaller campus was very attractive to me,” Chris remembered. “After meeting some of the music faculty and realizing their love and commitment to music education, I was sold.”

When asked to share some of his favorite memories as a student, Chris had many, including regularly attending chapel services, weekly Baptist Student Union meetings and Campus at Prayer events. He was also a member of the former music fraternity, Phi Mu Alpha, and still keeps in contact with his brothers (and little sisters) today. One of the most exciting memories he shared was when the Wesleyan Pep Band was invited to travel to Massachusetts to cheer on the men’s basketball team

After graduation, Chris got his first job as the band director at Owensboro Catholic High School. He worked there, while also

serving as Eaton Memorial Baptist Church’s pianist, music director and youth director, before feeling called to complete his education at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky. “After completing that education, I was ‘sure’ God would lead me to a church position full-time, but He saw otherwise and I went into public education - which is a ministry of its own” he explained. “I was selected as the band director for South Hopkins Middle School in Hopkins County, Kentucky. In 2017, I retired after 30 years with the Hopkins County School System.” While working as an educator, Chris earned many accolades including Outstanding Middle School Director, Outstanding Teacher from the KY PTA, Middle School Teacher of the Year for Hopkins County and many, many more, but he considers the success of his students his biggest ‘career win.’ “Working in music, you get to see the development of skills and

talents into beautiful sounds. Watching my students be awarded for their efforts was most humbling.”

Another one of the questions we asked Chris was if he had any advice to share with our incoming freshmen. “I do,” he answered. “First, get involved. There are so many experiences offered to you and taking advantage of those will help you figure out who and what you are. Second, meet new people. Allow yourself that opportunity to interact with others. They WILL become your lifelong friends. Third, learn from your instructors and approach each experience as ‘I might use this in my upcoming career. Even at 59, I am STILL learning from my educational experiences at Wesleyan.”

We probably aren’t the only ones who expected Chris to return to the classroom after retiring.

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In 2019, he began working as an accompanist in the Owensboro Public School System and stays busy doing that, spending time with his daughters and serving his church and on the KWC Alumni Association Board of Directors.

Without a doubt, the most emotional memory Chris shared with us was that of him meeting his wife. "I'd be remiss not to mention meeting the love of my life at KWC. I had prayed for a soulmate, and I found her at Wesleyan," he shared. "Our life together was cut short by a terrible cancer, but Wesleyan was responsible for our getting together and because of that connection, I now have two beautiful daughters who constantly remind me of my soulmate and our time together at our alma mater." It was a true Wesleyan love story.

As we concluded, we asked Chris if there was anything else he'd like to share - "I've had many roles in my life - husband, father, band/chorus teacher, music minister, dance dad, pianist, musical director - I am very blessed to tie so many of these to my days at Wesleyan. I am beyond blessed to be an alumnus of such a wonderful, caring community." Chris, the feeling is mutual. Thank you for being an active alum and for using your talents to lead and educate others. We are glad to call you a Panther!