

# Eat, Sleep, March

## *Vivika Ortiz's journey to becoming the GJHS Marching Band Drum Major*

story by riley **pope** photos by alondra **sanchez**

Being the marching band drum major is no easy job but senior Vivika Ortiz did an exceptional job for the 2021-2022 season. Ortiz stood out as drum major this year when she wore a long black dress and white gloves. The last time a drum major has strayed from the typical marching uniform was in 2016.

"I thought [the dress] was a fit towards the show and so I asked [Isaac Lavadie, marching band advisor] and I was allowed to wear the dress," Ortiz said. Ortiz's dress not only fit the show but sparked very positive reactions from the students and staff as GJHS.

Ortiz started playing the flute in middle school after her mom convinced her to join band. After the passing of her 7th grade band teacher, Mr. Lavadie took West Middle School's band program under his wing.

"[Mr. Lavadie] taught us [band students] the ways and that was something I really needed to keep me locked in [to band]," Ortiz said.

Freshman year, Ortiz marched flute then decided to march piccolo her sophomore and junior year, shaping her career for senior year as drum major. Ortiz interviewed and auditioned for this position. The questions in this process were based off leadership and handling pressure as conducting the entire marching band is not an easy job. Being the drum major comes with lots of responsibilities and dedication.

"She was definitely the most qualified," said Lavadie. Lavadie believes Ortiz's strongest character trait is being able to tell you exactly what she's thinking.

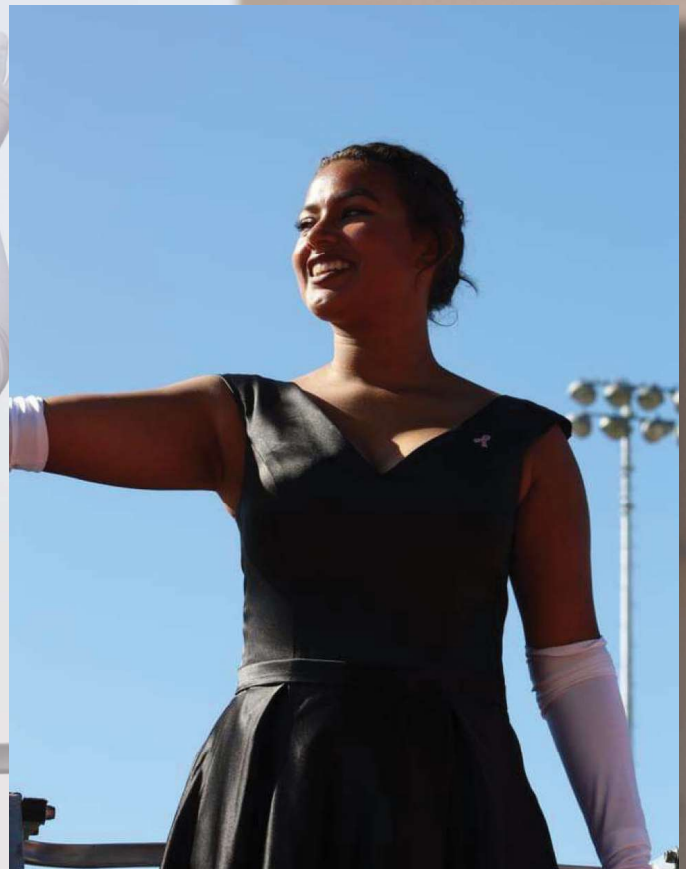
"You know exactly where you stand with her and to have that courage, to be able to tell your classmates exactly where you're at and not beat around the bush or be two faced about things at that age is a very strong character trait as far as I'm concerned," said Lavadie.

Ortiz is in charge of conducting the entire marching band however, conducting isn't the only responsibility Ortiz has as drum major. In her leadership position, Ortiz finds the hardest part of the job is finding solutions to every problem. But the solution to many problems are based off S.O.U.L., an acronym used by the GJHS marching band. S.O.U.L. stands for selflessness, ownership, unity and larger purpose. Ortiz embodies all these qualities which make an ideal marching band member.

Ortiz's favorite memory of marching band this year was band camp. She said the freshmen were so reserved and the rest of the band had to work on getting them out of their shells.

"Now everyone has made such great connections, we don't have little cliques in the band, we are one whole group," said Ortiz.

The 2021-2022 school year marching band season ended Oct. 29 when they performed their final show at the state competition.



"It didn't end how we wanted it to, scoring was a little unfair [at state] but it was really great seeing everyone evolving from where they started," Ortiz said. Many members in the marching band have grown into stronger musicians from where they first started to now.

Mr. Lavadie was really impressed with Ortiz's performance as drum major this year.

"It was just survival mode [after the COVID season last year] so for her to be able to come in after probably our hardest season and then do what she was able to do, she did a great job," said Lavadie.