

Amherst Town Band celebrates 40 years

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For four decades, the Amherst Town Band has been filling parks, parades, and community celebrations with music.

Now, as the volunteer ensemble celebrates its 40th anniversary, it is marking both its rich history and a new chapter.

The band was founded in 1986 by Jean Butler, then a music teacher at Souhegan High School, after musicians who had performed in Amherst PTA productions expressed interest in continuing to play together. Under Butler's leadership, the group grew steadily, attracting musicians from across the region and expanding its performance schedule.

Today, the band includes about 35 volunteer musicians. While some are current or retired music educators, most are amateur musicians who participate simply for the enjoyment of making music and sharing it with the community.

The Amherst Town Band has become a familiar presence at the town's outdoor summer concert series, Fourth of July parade, and December tree-lighting celebration. Over the years, the ensemble has also performed throughout southern New Hampshire, in Massachusetts and Maine, and twice traveled to Milford Haven, Wales, for performances.



In 2004, the Amherst Town Band traveled to Wales and performed under the direction of Patricia McMullen. (Courtesy photo.)

The band is also navigating a leadership transition. After the current music director stepped down, three experienced conductors volunteered to share directing responsibilities while the band's executive board searches for a new music director. Butler, who recently returned to New Hampshire, has joined former music director Patricia McMullen and Gordon Estabrook, conductor of the Temple Town Band, in leading rehearsals and performances. All three also perform as members of the band.

The Amherst Town Band will celebrate its 40th anniversary with a dinner in September, honoring the musicians, directors, and volunteers who have helped sustain the ensemble since its founding. For more information, visit amhersttownband.org.