

Dear Gateway friends and family,

With WGI championships coming up this weekend, I wanted to take a moment to share a story with everyone. Some of you are already aware of the events that occurred a few weeks ago after our local circuit championships. On the way back, our equipment truck and trailer ended up on their sides at highway speeds where it skidded to a halt over the course of the next couple hundred feet. The pictures below are worth a thousand words so I won't try to describe the scene that you can clearly see. We'll never know if the wreck was caused by a failure of anti-sway equipment, blown tire, extreme wind shear or a combination of factors. The important thing is that our driver walked away - or crawled out of a broken window - with nothing more than scrapes, bruises and a gallery of horrific memories. For that, the entire Gateway family will be eternally grateful. Things can always be replaced....

This scenario is near the top of the list of 'worst nightmares' that can keep a unit director up at night. With only a few weeks left to go until championships and most of our equipment in various states of destruction, I will admit that I had brief visions of our season coming to a screeching halt. Sometimes it takes adversity to see just how strong you are. In our case, we got to see how strong the music community can be. This wreck happened on a Sunday evening. Our two broken vehicles and all of our stuff was moved to a nearby towing / salvage company's facility. Late Monday night, we had a brief conference call with our staff and members to share the news as most of them were not aware. Ten hours later, there were over a dozen people at the salvage yard sorting through the wreckage. Everything was loaded onto a truck and moved to a donated storage facility where we could start the process of literally putting the group back together. On Wednesday, we put out an email to a few local band programs asking for a little help and the word spread quickly. By the following weekend's rehearsal, less than 5 days from the accident and 48 hours from our call for help, we had offers to borrow more equipment than we needed from as far away as 300 miles. Not only did we not have to cancel the season, our members were rehearsing on the equipment they needed by the Saturday morning after the wreck. As we start the final week of our season, these events have only cost the group an unbelievable 4 hours of rehearsal time.

The last few weeks have been surreal. In my 15th WGI season (9 with Gateway), I have found the most amazing, stressful and humbling experience of them all. To me, this is not a story about a tragedy befalling a small music non-profit, but one that serves as a testament to the kindness and spirit of the community. It's hard to express the gratitude that we as a group feel toward all of the individuals, schools, independent groups, sponsors and friends who have come together to make sure that our members are able to finish the journey they started last fall. When Gateway takes the floor this weekend in Dayton, it will be on the efforts, and literally, the equipment of more people and organizations than I can name in this letter. I've heard that you should count your blessings. We'll be starting that soon, because it's going to take a while.

In Sincere gratitude,

-Paul Richardson

Gateway Indoor Percussion



