

HAPPENINGS IN THE HILLS: Litchfield grad directs pep band at Syracuse

BY JOHN MCKENNA Republican American June 10, 2020 123 0

You have **1** free articles left. [Subscribe Today](#)



Ben

Vermilyea of Litchfield is the director of the pep band at Syracuse University, where he will be entering his junior year. John McKenna Republican-American

LITCHFIELD - Litchfield High School graduate Ben Vermilyea has a guaranteed front-row seat for Syracuse University men's and women's basketball home games next season, but instead of focusing on the games, he'll be directing his attention at

his fellow student musicians making up the school's pep band. Vermilyea, who will be a junior, is entering his second and final year as director of the pep band. It's his job to conduct the band before games, during breaks in play, at halftime and the end of games. He made his debut as director during a Syracuse men's game against Virginia last winter at the Carrier Dome, where a crowd of 30,000 watched the Orange take on their Atlantic Coast Conference rival. "It's a cool experience to be with the band in front of so many people," Vermilyea said. "It's great to be able to do it with an awesome group of students and even better when people tell you the band sounds great." Vermilyea secured the job of director entering his sophomore year following a successful audition and will hold it through his junior year before stepping down to do student-teaching as a senior. He's a music education major and has his sights set on a career as a music teacher. As a freshman, Vermilyea played trombone in the pep band. He also plays the instrument in the Syracuse marching band that performs during football games. Practicing with the bands takes up six to eight hours of his time each week, he said. Standing before the pep band as it plays for large crowds in the Carrier Dome has strengthened his confidence. "The value of directing in front of that many people is that you get the feeling that you can do anything," he said. Vermilyea's interest in music started when he was a student at Center School in Litchfield. The interest continued at Litchfield Intermediate School before really taking root in high school, where music teachers Dan Porri and Peter Perkins provided inspiration. "They were always there supporting me," Vermilyea said of his mentors.

• • •