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# PATRICK CULLER DEVOTED LIFE TO TEACHING MUSIC

*Martin E. Comas of The Sentinel Staff*

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Patrick F. Culler spent his life doing what he loved: sharing his passion for music with young students.

The former director of bands at University High School died Sunday of heart failure. He was 50.

"He was a ball of energy," said his wife, Diane Culler. "But he had a lot of patience with his students. He was always teaching them what he called 'life lessons.'"

Culler started teaching at the east Orange County high school in 1995.

In 1999, he took a leave of absence to pursue a doctorate in music from the University of Florida, which he would have completed in May 2001.

Born and raised in Chicago, Culler earned a music degree and a master's in teaching at Northern Illinois University.

He started playing the saxophone at age 10 and almost immediately knew music would be his life's work, his wife said.

His first teaching job was as an orchestra director for an Illinois high

school. Culler later became director of bands at Cameron University in Lawton, Okla.

In 1985, he moved to Orlando to help his mother, who was in failing health. He took on a teaching job at Colonial High School. In 1990, he was asked to help start the band and music programs at the new University High in east Orange.

His students were so good, his wife said, that they performed in several national venues -- including the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade in New York City, the Tournament of Roses Parade in Pasadena, Calif., and the Cherry Blossom Festival in Washington, D.C.

Culler was a member of University Carillon United Methodist Church and several professional music organizations.

Survivors also include, son, Christopher, Gainesville; sister, Ruth Frenden, Oak Forest, Ill.

Arrangements are being handled by Baldwin-Fairchild Funeral Home, Lake Ivanhoe Chapel, Orlando.