

# Music store with roots dating back to 1940s adapts to survive pandemic



Ron Hartwell, owner of The Hub Dayton Band BRD House, took over his business three and a half years ago after teaching with the business for 14 years.

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By Cosette Gunter – Contributor

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Teaching people to play an instrument requires a lot of one-on-one time and due to the pandemic that has been tough on businesses like The Hub Dayton Band BRD House in Vandalia

Ron Hartwell, who took over ownership of The Hub three and a half years ago after teaching with the business for 14 years, said he has adapted his business model to survive.

The business has its roots in Dayton, where it was formerly named Dayton Band and was housed above the Victoria Theater (named Victory Theatre at the time) in 1949. Former owners Bob and Sheila Daugherty re-launched the Dayton Band store and renamed it the BRD House after their late son Brandon Reed Daugherty. The Daugherty's operated the store from 2002 to 2018 before handing ownership to their, then, teacher, Ron Hartwell and his wife Deborah Hartwell.

Hartwell graduated from the Berklee College of Music and has been teaching music for 20 years. Hartwell teaches woodwinds, piano and voice, along with nine other teachers that are independent contractors with The Hub in Vandalia at 42 E. National Road.

Hartwell described his business as having two components to it.

"I divide it up into two segments," Hartwell said. "One, we do lessons, workshops and private or group lessons. On the other half, we have retail sales for band instrument rentals and repairs."

The Hub also hosts workshops for drawing, painting and crafts- for adults and children. K-12 tutoring is also available through The Hub.

"I really just like having a place for the community to gather," said Hartwell, "Somewhere where people can come and relax and grab a cup of coffee."

Before the pandemic shutdowns began, The Hub would host blues artists and young local bands at their facility for concerts. Hartwell said they've only done one concert since the coronavirus closings, setting up a Facebook Live event in Huber Heights.

"We're trying to adapt to the changing times," Hartwell said. "We try to plan ahead and do as much as (we) can, but (we) have to see what the conditions are."

The Hub only has one teacher currently doing in-person lessons. Hartwell said most students did not transition to online lessons. "It's been really brutal," Hartwell said. "We've had no workshops, group sessions, jam sessions or anything. That's a little bit of income and a lot of foot traffic that we don't have anymore. It's not a great time economically."

Hartwell said the business is getting more adjusted to the current situation, and business should see an uptick during band rental season in the fall. The Hub teaches over 15 different kinds of instruments, as well as lessons on music theory and composition.

"We wanted to keep this legacy going," Hartwell said. "What I love about teaching is that I'm learning just as much as I'm giving. I'm not just teaching the instrument; I'm teaching the music."

Hartwell says he likes the location in Vandalia because it allows them to accomplish everything they want to.

"Hopefully when this is over, we'll have people come for our living room converts again," Hartwell said. "Every part of the business I love. I really enjoy these things in life."