

## **Neal Halstead: #1 Jazz Man**

Joining Gold Band in 1991, Neal is one of Westwinds' earliest members. He moved to Calgary from Saskatchewan in 1990, and didn't think he would ever have the chance to play his saxophone again. Fortunately, his mother saw an ad for Westwinds in the Calgary Herald...and the rest is history.

Although Neal started out in concert band, he has been in jazz bands ever since they were first added to Westwinds. In fact, he and Dennis Orr (one of Westwinds' founders) were instrumental in adding jazz bands to the organization in 1995, a somewhat controversial issue at the time. Neal was the very first member of the very first Westwinds Jazz group. For a number of years, he was in both jazz and concert bands. Now he plays tenor saxophone in the Monday Gold Jazz Band

Westwinds has not only improved Neal's music skills, it has also kept him from "going over the edge" from the high levels of stress and long hours that his job entails. For two hours a week, at least, Neal can block out everything else and just be "in the music." In addition, he has made some very good friends through Westwinds.

Besides playing in the bands, Neal has been band manager, head librarian, treasurer, volunteer, and is currently on the Westwinds 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary committee. Through his involvement with the organization, he has seen first-hand the contribution of the directors:

*I don't think we can ever give enough recognition or thanks to the musical directors. We are so blessed to have found people with such amazing talent, such enthusiasm, such energy to work with us. Their commitment to the organization goes far beyond the rehearsals, the preparation for the rehearsals, the meetings, the schlepping of equipment to venues - and back again - the guidance and advice provided to the executive and volunteers, and the one-on-one we have all experienced. Their commitment goes far beyond the time they put in. Without this amazing group of musicians, this organization wouldn't be celebrating its 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary - plain and simple. They believe in*

*music, they believe in education, they believe in the concept of community music organizations, they believe in community adult musical education (which is a pretty unique concept when you think about it) and they believe in each and every one of us. It is indeed a privilege and an honour to work with every one of the directors, and I thank them all.*