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Sun Valley Band - A behind the scenes look

Introduction

Many people hear about Band for the first time when their child is in Middle school. We have all seen bands on TV or in parades, but now your child is involved directly with one. This is all new to many parents and I wanted to give you a little information to help answer some questions you may have about the program or just make some interesting reading.

First, what most people find surprising is the Marching Band program is not directly funded by the school system. There are funds provided to Mr. Reynolds each year by the school system, but these funds go more to the class room needs. Mr. Reynolds' time, the Band room, school grounds for practices and the school administration, are all the county provides the program.

The term Band program is a general term that includes Marching Band, Winter Guard, Jazz Band and Concert Band. When money is raised, it goes to support all these programs.

The term Guard is in reference to the non-musical instrument performers in Marching Band and Winter Guard. The term Guard and Color Guard are one in the same. Color Guard is traditionally the visual representation of the music. Modern Color Guards use flags, sabres, rifles, and a few other pieces of equipment, as well as a mix of ballet, jazz, modern, and contemporary modern dance to assist with the visual representation. In Marching Band season, the color guard is another section just like the wood winds, brass or percussion sections. After the Marching Band season, our color guard performs independently, and with a different program, in Winter Guard competitions. In Winter Guard, the guard will perform to recorded music and not the live music such as they do with the Marching Band.

What should we expect from the Band program?

With athletic programs, you expect your child to be practicing their sport and participating in games or competitions. The band program is almost exactly the same. Starting in the summer, the kids will begin their practices with Summer Band Camp. Starting early in the morning when it is cool, until late in the evening when it is hot, your child will learn the current years program they will be performing for the season. The band will concentrate on a competitive field performance to entertain at half time and work to perfect throughout the season. Depending on if your child is in color guard or plays a musical instrument, they will learn the music, the marching, and the dance/props performance for the 8 minute program. A lot to remember. When camp is over, the band will then practice at least two days a week (Tuesday and

Thursdays). It is important that your child attends these practices in that they will continue to learn their program. As we attend competitions and feedback is received from the judges, Mr. Reynolds may make changes to the performance to help raise the bands score at the next competition. A simple change could effect every person on the field. The only time they will learn that change is at practices.

When football season starts, we will perform at half time. Consider these as “scrimmage games” for the band and the parents that assist with the program. Starting in September and into October, the band will attend band competitions on a few Saturdays. We will be competing against other schools who attend. Each band is “classed” by number of woodwind & brass performers they have. These competitions have both a musical instrument side and a Guard, or flag presentation. At the end of each competition, there is an award ceremony where each band is ranked and awarded trophies according to how their performance was compared to the other schools. Step into the band room and take a look at the shelves around the top of the room. These are the trophies previous years bands received and are a reminder to the legacy your child is continuing.

Because the students will be at the competitions for most of a day, they will need to eat and drink at the event. Please budget money for your child to be able to purchase food and drink.

After Marching season, which ends around Thanksgiving, the band program changes to Concert Band, Jazz Band and Winter Guard.

I see many parents on the field....what are they doing?

The parents you see on the field are the stage hands of the performance. They help bring the front ensemble (the carts with all the instruments on them) onto the field and assist with any props the band may be using for that performance. If you volunteer for the “Pit Crew” or “Props”, you will be one of those parents on the field helping. It is an important task in that we make sure the band is setup the same way every time. If the front ensemble is not in the same order every time, the kids will not get to the correct place in time to play correctly. If a prop is not in the correct location on the field, a band member may march or dance into the prop. Very important.

Competitions.....will they put me to sleep?

With knowing how many hours your child put into our program, you now have a respect as to the effort put into other programs. They are very entertaining. These also provide a way for parents to support the band program, school and child by cheering the band on. For the 2011-2012 school year, we are considering to try to have a Sun Valley Spartan Sound Pep section in the stand of each performance. The idea is for all Sun Valley parents to sit together and cheer the band on. Watch for more details.

How do we do all this?

Great question....each year, before the end of the school year, the current Band Booster Board meet with the board for the next school year to make a budget for the upcoming year. For the 2011-2012 school year, our budget is about \$45,000. About half of this is from the band camp fees. The remaining half comes from fundraising. Your fees basically cover about half of the expenses for the year. So instead of paying \$700 per child, you only need to pay \$325 up front. Not too bad. That's, not too bad **if** we are able to raise the remaining funds. Through a series of fundraisers, we will raise the rest of the money. We try to pick fund raisers that allow your child to approach others for support. Grand parents, relatives, neighbors and friends all make great supporting donors. However, it takes a little coaching from parents to get the kids to participate and ask for those donations. Group fund raisers like car washes give the kids a way to make money and have fun together.

Some of these fund raisers are ones your family may also want to contribute towards. Our car washes, spaghetti dinner, and raffles are just a few you might want to also financially support. With this in mind, over the whole school year, you may spend an additional \$200 towards these fund raisers for your family.

Students are expected to participate in ALL fund raisers throughout the school year.

The other part to make this work is parent volunteers. Remember, the only full time person we get from the school is Mr. Reynolds. He is busy instructing our kids. It is up to the parents & families to help with the organizing, travel logistics, maintenance on equipment, uniform care and prop manufacturing. For each performance, between 12 and 20 parent volunteers are needed. If you do not see that many, that means that some of the parents are doubling up because we did not get enough people to step forward and help.

What can I do?

Well you may be thinking that this stuff is all new to me.....how can I get my feet wet? You can be part of the program by volunteering. Volunteers do receive perks. Typically they will get into the competition or game, for free, that they are volunteering at, get free water and they get to spend time with their kids and friends. You may not be thinking about it now, but high school marks the last few remaining years you get to spend with your child. By volunteering, you get to have a great time helping the band and interacting with other band kids and your own child. When you volunteer, all those stories your child tells you about of what happened to another child, now makes more sense. Working with the kids also makes you feel younger. I remember the first time I volunteered and I heard one of the kids tell another child a joke. I heard that joke when I was in High School. I could not believe that joke was still around. It brought back many great memories of my younger years.

Our Band program typically only needs volunteers during Marching season. The exception to this is in the spring when a few chaperons are needed for Concert Band. We have formally organized our volunteers into groups that best organizes the Bands needs.

The number of volunteers we need for each event we attend may be different. We may need 3 pit crew for one event and 4 for the next. It depends on the venue we are attending and the needs of the program we are performing each year.

When you volunteer for a position, it is not for the entire season....it is only for the specific event that happens on a specific date. This is good for those who have a chaotic schedule. You may be able to only volunteer for one date at the beginning of Marching season and then again at the end of Marching season. That is OK. The important thing is that you did volunteer and assist the program.

Here are some of the positions you may be interested in volunteering for. These volunteer positions are date specific.

Pit Crew

This position will assist with loading and unloading our equipment truck. Musical instruments and props will be loaded onto the truck at the school. We will then unload the instruments at the event, assist with getting the kids to the field, assist with setting up and removing the backdrops from the field (working with the prop volunteers), and then getting everything back to the truck. We then load the truck and bring everything back to the school and unload it again.

Snacks

This volunteer is responsible to bring or send snacks to the school for the band to consume before and after competitions/games. Typically we ask for snacks such as Lance or Austin crackers, gummy fruit snacks, granola bars, etc. The snacks should be individually packaged and store purchased.

Chaperone's

Ride the bus to the events interacting with the kids, sit in the stands with the kids and then ride back on the bus. What could be more simple?

50/50 Raffle Sales

During each home game, we sell raffle tickets for \$1 a piece for the first half of the game. Volunteers will walk the stands selling these tickets on the home and away side of the field. At half time, the money is counted and half of the money goes to the winner and half goes to the band. To meet our budget, we need to sell \$320 in tickets during each game.

Bus Runner

This position may not be required every year.....if required, this person will drive our bus drivers down to the central bus yard in Monroe. After the event, they will follow the bus back to the yard and bring the drivers back to the school. If the school is able to keep buses at the school, we will not need this volunteer. For the games on Friday, volunteers need to be able to get to the bus yard early...verify your full time job schedule, that you are able to be available early enough (4:00-5:00).

Field Props

This is your time to be in the spot light. This year we have 10+ field props to go onto the field and then take them off. We had props several years ago and I can not express enough how important these positions need to be filled. High school students or parents are able to work these positions. Those volunteering will assist with assembling the props, taking the props to the field (we follow the band), setting the props up on the field, take them off the field, disassemble them at the equipment truck and then load it on the truck.

Getting a little deeper

You may find yourself saying that I can do a little more, or I have some skills the band could use. Here are some positions that are assigned for the Marching season and do require a little more time than the ones above. These are coordinators that typically organize other volunteers or assist with a specific task.

50/50 coordinator

This person is overall responsible for the 50/50 raffle and coordinating the volunteers. Most of the volunteers helping with the 50/50 raffle have not done anything like this before. The coordinator will help train the volunteers to get things going. The coordinator will also be responsible for making sure we have enough tickets before each game and collecting the money/tickets during the football game as tickets are sold.

Uniform coordinator

This person is responsible for measuring each Band student and assigning a uniform to them for the Marching Band season. At the end of the Marching Band season (and on rare occasions during Marching season), the coordinator will prepare the uniforms to be sent to our dry cleaners.

The coordinator is also responsible for overseeing any alterations that are made to the uniforms. These garments are used year after year and should only be altered for length, however, other adjustments could come up.

After each game or competition, the uniform coordinator should make sure that someone is assigned the task or misting the uniforms with Febreze to keep them fresh.

Volunteer coordinator

As of the 2011-2012 school year, the volunteers are being coordinated using online reservations. However, we are all busy and we may forget about a specific event we volunteered for. The Volunteer Coordinator is responsible for calling each volunteer the week of the upcoming event to remind them. If we do not have enough volunteers for a specific event, the coordinator may also be asked to help find someone to fill the open spots.

I'm more of an organizer...

If you find yourself wanting to support the Band even more, please consider a position on the Booster Board. These positions can be very time consuming. The idea behind the Booster Board is to do everything except teach the kids the performance. Mr. Reynolds job is to teach the students, and that alone can be a very demanding job.

During Marching season (remember this is only for about the first three months of school), the Booster Board is most active. Typically a board member will spend 15-20 hours a week volunteering with the band. This time does include attending the games and competitions. You may be saying that you can not afford to give that much time. Consider a joint husband and wife volunteer team.

President(s)

The President(s) is the Chief-Executive Officer(s) and will preside over all meetings; will supervise and coordinate all business activities; will sign and execute any papers and documents on behalf of the Band Boosters; will have collateral authority to sign checks; and perform any other duties prescribed by the Executive Committee. This position shall also be the Band Boosters representative to the P.T.S.A. The President will have no voting power except to break a tie.

Vice-President(s)

The Vice President(s), in the absence of the President(s), performs the duties of that office. In case of a vacancy, the Vice-President(s), will serve that office until the end of the term. In addition, the office will serve as the Chairman of the Fund Raising Committee.

Secretary

The Secretary is responsible for keeping an accurate record of the proceedings at all regular Executive Committee meetings, Band Booster meetings, and special meetings.

The Secretary shall submit, in writing, the minutes of regular Band Booster meetings for distribution and approval by the membership. The Secretary will maintain a register of Band and Band Booster membership, to include the students name, the parents name, address, telephone number, and e-mail address. The absence of the President(s) and Vice-President(s), the Secretary will preside at all meeting(s) until a presiding officer pro-tem is elected. The Secretary is responsible for all normal correspondence as designated by the President(s).

Treasurer

The Treasurer shall receive all monies of the Band Boosters and shall keep an accurate record of receipts and expenditures, using accepted bookkeeping methods, and shall pay out funds as authorized by the Executive Board with approval outlined in G S 115c 40-47. The Treasurer shall submit and provide copies of an itemized, monthly written report of all financial activities for

the information and approval of the membership. The Treasurer shall maintain the records and documents as to facilitate the annual financial audit.

Are there any perks to being on the board?

If working 20 hours a week during Marching season, calling parents and local businesses, not having your Friday nights or Saturdays to yourself, being medical support on rare occasions, and loosing sleep are perks, then yes we get perks. The board members typically have a 14 month long responsibility and their kids pay the same fees as everyone else.

However, what you receive in return for your efforts are seeing the kids perform and receive recognition for their efforts by the trophies they receive at competitions. You know that you were part of a team that made that happen. No board, no marching season....it's that simple.

Other Donations that are needed

There are still a few items that are needed that need to be donated.

- Snacks
- Cases of Water
- Batteries (AAA, AA & 9 Volt)
- Tissues
- Febreeze
- Baby Wipes
- Spindle of Blank CDs

OK, I want to learn more. Who can I talk to?

Well, if you are still reading this letter, that means you may be interested in helping. You are always welcome to talk to or email Mr. Reynolds or one of the board members. We can answer most of your questions. You can also attend one of the board meetings which are normally held the 2nd Tuesday of the month. Exceptions are the summer months when we do not formally meet.

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