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Page: 1B

Area band to march on Fourth in D.C.

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Cinnaminson High invited to parade

One piccolo, three flutes, six clarinets . . . the number of instruments is not what makes the Cinnaminson High School Marching Band special.

After all, only 40 youngsters are in the ensemble, making it relatively small by most standards.

What counts is the talent, and the community support, that will enable Cinnaminson to strut its musical stuff during America's Independence Day Parade in Washington, D.C.

Cinnaminson is one of 15 high school bands from across the nation -- and the only one from New Jersey -- that will march down Constitution Avenue beginning at noon July 4. Some network TV coverage is expected.

"Once you give these kids something to shoot for, they go for it," band director Deb Knisely says. "Every time I ask them to step up, they do."

So has the community.

About \$13,000 of the \$25,000 fundraising goal for the band trip has been raised so far, according to Joy Korn, president of the Cinnaminson High School Music Boosters Association.

The money will defray the expense of the trip for the individual band members and their families.

A spaghetti dinner on a Saturday in May netted a tidy \$3,500.

Other contributions large and small have come from local businesses and individuals, including some outside Cinnaminson.

Anthony's Jewelers in Palmyra donated \$500, and Riverton physician Dr. Anthony Cherico donated \$200. Teachers and local veterans organizations also are pitching in.

"This level of support shows how proud our community is of the marching band," Korn says.

Credit for this goes to the students, of course. But some also belongs to Knisely, a 42-year-old Riverton resident who knows what a difference generosity can make in the life of a young musician.

Knisely was in elementary school in western Pennsylvania when she had an opportunity to learn to play an instrument. But her family couldn't afford it, so she shared a flute owned by a friend.

And later, her paternal grandmother came up with the \$110 needed for a flute of Knisely's own.

"I took to it like a duck takes to water," says Knisely, who went on to play piccolo and tuba in the marching band of Mohawk Junior-Senior High School in Bessemer, Pa.

It was there that she learned how important it is for a high school marching band to please the audience. That, more than dominance over other marching outfits, was what the band strove for.

"We were competitive, but in a different way," recalls Knisely, who describes the high school marching band world in South Jersey as especially competitive.

Speaking of which, in 2004, her first year in charge, Cinnaminson won the Cavalcade of Bands Independence conference championship in Hershey, Pa.

It was that victory that led to the Washington, D.C., engagement. Music Celebrations International Inc., which runs the parade under a contract with the National Park Service, contacted Cavalcade for recommendations.

Among other materials, Knisely sent Music Celebrations a video of the band's crowd-pleasing performance of a suite of Pink Floyd songs.

No surprise that "Money" will be among the two selections Cinnaminson plays in D.C. as the band marches along Constitution from 7th to 17th streets.

"It's a wonderful thing to be marching down that marble canyon," says Music Celebrations spokesman Ned Elliott.

"It's a real widening of the horizons for the bands. A life-changing experience."

Amy Miller, an 18-year-old senior in the color guard, and Mark Ferraro, an 18-year-old senior who plays trumpet, are the band's student leaders.

"It's an honor for all of us, and we all know it," Ferraro says.

Although the prospect of national exposure is a bit daunting, "we have to remember we've done many parades," he adds.

"We can't think about the cameras. I think we'll be fine.

"We've got a pretty tough band."

Says Miller, "We're all excited . . . We know the whole nation's going to be watching us, and it's a little scary. But the reason we're going means a lot to us."

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HOW TO HELP

To help the Cinnaminson High School Marching Band participate in the Fourth of July parade in Washington, call (856) 829-7770, ext. 196, or send a check to Joy Korn, president, Cinnaminson Music Boosters Association, c/o Cinnaminson High School, 1197 Riverton Road, Cinnaminson 08077.

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