

Press Release

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World's Largest High School Marching Band Reunion 50th Anniversary West Genesee Wildcat Alumni Marching Band Memorial Day Weekend, 2016

Camillus, NY - May 10, 2016 - The world's largest Alumni High School Marching Band will take to the streets of Camillus, New York to celebrate its 50th anniversary on Memorial Day. A record 640 alumni from **The West Genesee Wildcat High School Marching Band** will participate (validation is being sought from the Guinness World Records). The band marches under the direction of Bruce Burritt, who founded the program in 1964. The length of the band will stretch almost ¼ mile and the group will make a sound not to be forgotten playing The Battle Hymn of the Republic.

The marchers, whose ages range from 18 to 78 years old, include CEO's, corporate executives, professors, and professional musicians. They are among the most awarded in US history with 34 of 42 New York State championships. Many members will march with family members including spouses, siblings, parents, children, grandparents and grandchildren – all graduates of this award-winning, sustained program that instilled in its students a deep sense of discipline, hard work and leadership.

Long time organizer of the reunion, Kevin Surace is CEO, Appvance in San Jose, CA. Surace says band members still embody lessons they learned in high school. "Marching band is a team sport," he says. "To become national champions, which we were in 1980, our leaders shaped us into a winning powerhouse. Those lessons created a foundation for my life – and for those of thousands of others who have passed through the program. Many other members – from CEOs to moms and service workers – describe a similar enduring impact."

Another alum, Dr. Cheryl Blanchard, CEO, Microchips Biotech in Lexington, MA added, "I am flying to Syracuse directly from a board meeting in Europe, piccolo in hand. I come to be reminded of the amazing teamwork and lessons with instructors and lifelong friends, which gave me the discipline and hard work to succeed in life. The amazing sound of this group brings tears to my eyes every time we perform."

Dozens of alumni who became music professionals include Michael Burritt, Chair, Woodwinds, Brass and Percussion Department and Professor of Percussion at Eastman School of Music, and Rich Mercurio, a New York City based musician, drummer and producer. Mercurio is currently with Idina Menzel and is drummer/orchestrator for the new Broadway hit, *Waitress*, "I return to experience the program – and people – that gave me a huge advantage in my career. The sense of community is rare. It developed me musically and personally; the instructors showed us that hard work pays off – period."

Bill Davern, Director of Fine Arts at West Genesee added, "I have been involved in this program for 33 years, and every participant, from the late 1960's to the current band continues to amaze me. Their dedication to the art and focus on being the very best they can be inspires me every day."

This phenomenal event - held every five years - demonstrates all that is good about America.

About the West Genesee Wildcat Marching Band

The West Genesee Wildcat Marching Band is a nationally acclaimed high school marching band from Camillus, New York, a suburb of Syracuse. This band program is among the most winning of any in American history. The Wildcats have placed first in the New York State Championship 34 times in the competition's 42-year history in the highest category each year. The Wildcats earned 1st place in the Falls Church Tournament of Bands and the St. Petersburg Festival of States as National Champions 3 times, appeared in the Washington Cherry Blossom Festival Parade, several nationally televised Buffalo Bills and Jets games, and participated in 28 BOA regional and national competitions, winning Class AA regionals 3 times, Grand National Class AA 1st place (1990) and 1st place in the USBands Group 6-Open Class National Championship (2013).

About the Reunion

Since 1981, The West Genesee Alumni Marching Band has held a reunion every five years, often drawing 400-500 marchers from all over the world to march again with this great organization. 2016 marks the 50th anniversary of the band's first competition in 1966. The reunion band will include over 640 marchers in the Camillus, NY Memorial Day parade. The Alumni band will practice the two days prior to the parade and will march on Memorial Day.

Video of the 2011 Reunion

2011 Alumni Band - Memorial Day Parade https://youtu.be/VSYVMU7XQ_M?t=2m5s

2011 Alumni Band "Battle Hymn" Concert Recording <https://youtu.be/SzMFJxaJAuE>

West Genesee Marching Band Alumni Website wgwildcatband.com

Contact

For further information, please contact:

Lisa Furnish

lfurnish@mchips.com

720-233-8145

Cheryl Blanchard

Cblanchard@mchips.com

260-255-9211

Local contact:

Bill Davern

wdavern@westgenesee.org

315-657-6077

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