

For Immediate Release:

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West High Band Thanks Community for Opportunity Also: Details On How to Follow Their Trip “Live”

Corning, NY –After redeeming over 600,000 bottles and cans, thousands of hours of fund-raising, carefully packaging 1.5 tons of equipment and uniforms, the West High Band is ready for take-off to London. Invited to be one of just 22 U.S. marching bands to perform in the 25th Annual New Year’s Day Parade, and the only band representing New York State, the West High band organization has met its goal of raising nearly \$500,000 to participate in this event.

The 133 students making the trip will pay for about 60% of the trip cost of \$2,900 per person with the remainder covered by band parent organization fundraising. Several students will receive more assistance based on financial need.

“We didn’t want a student to miss this opportunity because their family couldn’t afford it,” said Robert Locker, President of the parent group, West High Band Aides.

Thirty-two adults will travel with the band as chaperones, nurses and band directors. “We also wanted to share our experiences with family and friends at home and will be loading information and photos to our Web site and Facebook pages in real time,” Locker added. An IT professional, volunteering his time, will travel with the group to facilitate communications.

Band members will leave for London on December 27th at 7am on board four coaches that will transport them to JFK International Airport. It will require three flights spanning two airlines to transport such a large group to London’s Heathrow Airport. The band has scheduled several educational sightseeing opportunities while there including trips to Dover, Canterbury, The Royal Observatory in Greenwich, The Tower of London, Tower Bridge, a performance of the stage hit “Wicked” and the London Eye. The highlight of the trip will be the parade, one of the largest in the world with it’s over 10,000 participants. A special invitation was issued to the band in September, 2009, when Lord Bramble, Lord Lieutenant to her Majesty the Queen, visited Corning to deliver the coveted invitation.

Corning-Painted Post School District Superintendent Michael Ginalski said, “The West High Band has a tradition of performing in many exciting venues such as The Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade and various college and NFL football games. However, the opportunity to participate in the New Year’s Day Parade in London is further evidence of the long-standing excellence of the West High Band. Kurt Powell and George Cowburn would be very proud of this great accomplishment.”

School Board President Tom Tammaro said, “It’s been said that one step, then another and the longest mile can be reached. Well, this West High Band organization has added a few more steps in reaching their goal. There was one more dinner, one more recycling event at Watkins Glen racetrack, one more basket raffle, and of course, one more can/bottle collected in our community. The effort that was made by the students and their parents to accomplish this mission produced an enduring community relationship that will last forever.”



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The West High Band would like to thank over 300 donors that are listed on their website, www.whslondon2011.org, for their generous support. Donors include both small and large businesses as well as private individuals from all over the United States. They also wish to thank the hundreds of anonymous donors of bottles and cans. “We are fortunate to have such a strong network of businesses and individuals in this region that want to contribute back to our communities,” said Locker. One business was chosen to provide their locally produced crafts as a part of a gift exchange that will occur at a reception following the parade. Vitrix Glass of Corning has produced a special commemorative glass “Palace Guard Snowman” sold exclusively by West High Band students as a student fundraiser. A West High Band group comprised of band directors and parent leadership will present the snowmen to London dignitaries at the reception.

In addition to the fund-raising and complex logistical planning of an overseas trip for nearly 200 people, the band has worked to refine their performance for the parade. Band Director Eric Griffin said, “The band has put in dozens of hours of rehearsal held on Saturday mornings over the past three months. We are proud to showcase the amazing talent of our fine students and want to thank the school and community for their support.” He added, “We can’t wait to make you proud. We are honored to represent our school, community and country.”

Walking the halls of West High this month, the anticipation and excitement is palpable. For many in the band, this will be their first international trip and in some cases the first plane excursion as well. When asked what band members are looking forward to the most, Senior Hannah Knowles said, “I’m excited for the London Eye, and to see Wicked. I hope we get to meet some British people, too.”

Tenor saxophone player Brady Watson said, “I want to go up in the London Eye! That’s going to be awesome.”

Dance machine member Miranda Muench said, “It’s kind of scary that it’s less than 10 days away. I haven’t packed yet! I’m excited to go through the airports with everyone, and to go up in the London Eye.”

Junior Lianna Johnson said, “I’ve never been to Europe before. I’m excited to see the sights, like the museums-and obviously, marching in the parade.”

Where to see the telecast and how to follow the trip live:

Locally, the parade telecast can be viewed live on Time Warner Cable channel 71, WJKP, starting at 7am on Saturday January 1st, 2011. There will also be a tape delayed broadcast of the parade on Saturday, January 1st at 12 noon, on WYDC (Cable Channels 13 and 702). There will be additional tape delayed rebroadcasts of the parade on cable channel 71 on Sunday, January 2nd at 8:00pm and on cable channels 13 and 702 on Saturday, January 8th at 5:00pm.

You can follow the band’s experiences on their website, www.whslondon2011.org, where you will find links that will provide daily photos, videos and live blogs. Each and every person that made this trip a reality can enjoy the experience along with the band!

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