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The Juneau Volunteer Marching Band Returns

The band is back for five performances, including two July 4th parades

By KORRY KEEKER
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Every year since 1976, the Juneau Volunteer Marching Band has practiced during June, performed in the Fourth of July parades, then vanished until the next summer.

"We appear, then we disappear, like Brigadoon," said co-founder Bill Ruddy, 65, a Juneau lawyer and a trumpet player for the last 54 years.

This year's season is no different, just a little more active, with five performances between Sunday, June 28 and Friday, July 4.

"One difference is we seem to have more young people this year," Ruddy said. "If you went back 25 years, there were very few young people in the band."

Approximately one-third of the 35 band members are high school students, said band director, sixth-year member and Floyd Dryden Middle School band teacher Scott Black. Black and Juneau-Douglas High School band teacher Ken Guiher have helped recruit players from JDHS.

"It's been nice to see," Black said. "It's changed the character of the group a little bit and made it reflect the entire spectrum."



Perennial performers: Scott Black conducts a rehearsal Monday for the Juneau Volunteer Marching Band at Dzantik'i Heeni Middle School.

MICHAEL PENN/THE JUNEAU EMPIRE

The band will play four marches during the two parades: "Americans We March," by Henry Fillmore; "National Emblem" by EE Bagley; and "Washington Post March" and "The Stars and Stripes Forever," by John Philip Sousa.

The group has added three "cartoon-type" songs to its program this year: "The



Getting ready for the Fourth: Bass drummer Bea Findlay shares a laugh with cymbal player Lynette Black as she wears a marching band hat during a Juneau Volunteer Marching Band practice Monday at Dzantik'i Heeni Middle School.

MICHAEL PENN/THE JUNEAU EMPIRE

"The instrumentation is actually quite good this year," Black said. "One of the roughest parts of putting together a group like this is it's all volunteer. It's not like you know who's going to be showing up at a rehearsal. Last year we had three flutes. The year before that I think we had 10 flutes."

The volunteer band has practiced in the Dzantik'i Heeni commons this year, instead of its usual spot at Floyd Dryden, which is being renovated.

"It is very strange in a secluded town of 30,000 that there is this much musical talent and this much musical interest," Black said. "I was in a town down south (Merced, Calif.) when something similar to this was attempted. There were 60,000 in the town itself. In the county, in the 30-mile radius, there were a couple hundred thousand. Even with that large of a group, we couldn't pull anything together like this."

Juneau Volunteer Marching Band Performances

Sunday, June 29: 3 p.m., Marine Park.

Monday, June 30: noon, Dimond Court Building steps in memorial



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Mickey Mouse March," "The Muppet Theme," and "The Sesame Street Theme." The Sesame Street selection was introduced when the Willington Junior High Band visited Dryden from Edmonton, Alberta, in early May. The Willington director sent Black the arrangement after the tour.

"You see how much fun we're having rather than seeing our marching. We spend a lot of time striving to be musical and not so much time on marching around," Black said. "The whole point is we want to play for two different groups: ourselves and the crowd. In doing that, we play a lot of different kinds of marches. We also play a lot of familiar songs, a few rock things, medleys from musicals, theme songs for cartoon shows, anything with a beat."

for former Alaska Chief Justice Jay Rabinowitz.

Thursday, July 3: noon, Marine Park.

Friday, July 4: Juneau Fourth of July Parade, Douglas Fourth of July Parade.

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