

Press Clippings 11/28/2017

---Courier News--- 11/28/17

566-member U46 high school marching band performs in Chicago's Thanksgiving parade

BY RAFAEL GUERRERO

NOVEMBER 27, 2017, 8:21 PM



Members of the School District U46 Unified Marching Band performed at the 2017 McDonald's Thanksgiving Parade in Chicago. The band featured more than 560 musicians from all five U46 high schools. (School District U46)

For the first time in almost a decade, hundreds of marching band students from the five high schools in Elgin-based U46 came together to march in Chicago Thanksgiving Day parade.

The U46 Unified Marching Band brought together 566 student musicians to perform in the downtown Chicago event Thursday morning. In 2008, more than 400 marching band students performed as one band during the same parade.

"We're very proud right now," said Jaimie Abney-Giraldo, the district's fine arts coordinator.

District spokeswoman Mary Fergus said it was one of the largest marching bands to ever participate in the parade; Abney-Giraldo said she overheard WGN's broadcasters say it was the largest group to ever participate.

"The validity on that, I am not going to claim," Abney-Giraldo joked.



Members of the School District U46 Unified Marching Band performed at the 2017 McDonald's Thanksgiving Parade in Chicago. The band featured more than 560 musicians from all five U46 high schools. (School District U46)

The mega-marching band had been under consideration since last school year, when Bartlett High School band director Eric Hollaway submitted the group's application to the Chicago Festival Association to participate in the McDonald's Thanksgiving Parade.

Abney-Giraldo said the discussion to bring back the unified marching band developed after realizing none of the band directors for the five high schools — Elgin, Larkin, South Elgin, Bartlett and Streamwood — were around in 2008.

The combined band only practiced in full twice, once in October and once last week, Abney-Giraldo said. In an attempt to show off the number of students participating, district staff attempted to take pictures before their parade performance, but they couldn't get all of the students in frame.

The band featuring 101 students playing clarinet, 79 on flute, 83 playing trumpet, almost 100 on the drumline and others, Abney-Giraldo said.



Members of the School District U46 Unified Marching Band performed at the 2017 McDonald's Thanksgiving Parade in Chicago. The band featured more than 560 musicians from all five U46 high schools. (School District U46)

"We're so lucky we had good weather," she said. "I've done that parade in freezing conditions, and it can get difficult to make the instruments play in the cold."

The size and ambition of such an undertaking is why the unified marching band remains a rarity. Abney-Giraldo said it requires hundreds of students, staff and parents to commit time for practice and the final performance. She said the undertaking also requires commitment from district administration, such as acquiring 22 school buses and bus drivers to transport students to and from the high schools on a holiday.



Members of the School District U46 Unified Marching Band performed at the 2017 McDonald's Thanksgiving Parade in Chicago. The band featured more than 560 musicians from all five U46 high schools. (School District U46)

When and where the band will perform again is still unknown, she said.

"We've been getting that question a lot," said Abney-Giraldo.