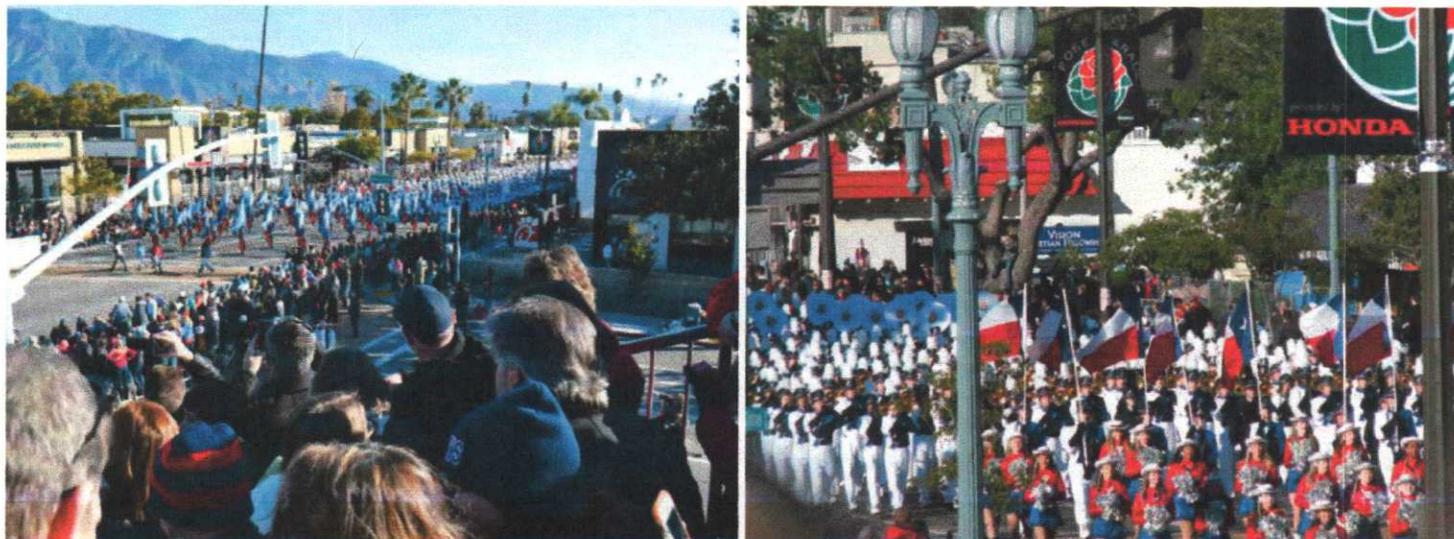


## EXPERIENCES



## 127TH TOURNAMENT OF ROSES PARADE

**Allen Eagle Escadrille, Allen, Texas**

By Amy L Charles, Photos © Allen Eagle Escadrille Parents

Everything's coming up roses ... and for the Allen Eagle Escadrille, it's not the first time: The band, colorguard and drill team performed in the prestigious Tournament of Roses Parade in 2006 and in 2016. This year, 716 students—199 freshmen, 182 sophomore, 182 juniors and 153 seniors—were part of the Allen, Texas, group's performance.

Amazing band parents and tremendous administration support helped make parade travel possible. With the Allen Band Booster Association, a Tournament of Roses Parade parent committee was created to help with sponsorships and organizing fundraisers. Tournament of Roses apparel was sold. There was a silent auction. Folks purchased rubber duck race tickets. The Escadrille set a new national record, selling close to 150 mattresses and earning \$25,000+ in one day. A recycle pickup event garnered \$7,000+. A free car wash brought in \$10,000+. Corporate sponsorships totaled more than \$95,000, with 50 businesses contributing.

The administration provided financial support to get the group to and from the airport, and provided two semi tractor-trailers to haul instruments, luggage and equipment. "They were a great asset to our travel and in our adventure to the Rose Parade," said Blaine Hinton, director of bands for the Escadrille. "Our band parents,

family and friends really stepped up to help the kids. They worked hard on the fundraisers and provided financial help to their children."

The entire trip was special: Loading and unloading the trailers. Surviving security and boarding with 746 travelers. Participating in the Disneyland Parade. Performing at Band Fest at Pasadena City College. Knott's Berry Farm thrill rides. Taking over Medieval Times Castle with 976 in attendance. The magnificent sunset at the Santa Monica Pier. Dipping toes in the Pacific Ocean. Getting up at 2 a.m., unloading at the staging site at 4:45, freezing until stepping off in the Tournament of Roses Parade at 8:11, marching 7.2 miles with 800,000 cheering spectators. Being named "fourth best moment of the 2016 Rose Parade" by newspaper readers across Los Angeles. HGTV announcers running out of Allen Eagles Escadrille facts and saying, "Folks, this is still the Allen Band!" Hearing throughout the trip that the students were nice, friendly and polite. "We have great parents that teach family values, manners and respect, that let the world see the character of our kids."

Hinton, with 27 years in music education, has been in Allen for six years, serving as director of bands the past three. Lisa Smentek,



## 765 TOTAL PARTICIPANTS

director of dance, has 31 years' experience, 13 in Allen. When they needed a reputable company experienced in meeting large group needs, they chose Masterpiece Tours. "They pay great attention to details and allow us to have a lot of input into trip details, then make the logistics work."

Masterpiece Tours' Andy Davidson, Paul Davis and Sharon Davis made the trip possible, Hinton notes, taking the challenge and pulling off the near-impossible. "With our numbers, they were able to effortlessly secure airline tickets, charter buses, hotel rooms, dining facilities and meals. The trip was well-organized and seamless, from departure to arrival."

The students were excited about the opportunities.

"Disneyland is the happiest place on Earth. This is the best day of my life, ever!" "I was so cold before the parade—and then when I saw all the people, I forgot about the cold and performed my best." "It was awesome performing at Band Fest. The crowd really made us feel special." "All our hard work paid off in the end." "The whole trip was amazing!" "I love music and I love band!" "My favorite part of the trip was the breakfast at the hotel each morning!" (Growing boys, Hinton adds.) "It was a blessing to be a part of the largest marching band in the nation that marched in the Rose Parade." "Hearing 'A-Up' coming from the Allen crowd along the parade route."

The directors were excited, too.

"We are very fortunate to be so tightly associated with our band to have the opportunity to participate with them," said Smentek. "A true blessing to be the only drill team in the Rose Parade. We

share unique company with only a few others in the country."

"I've traveled with a lot of groups over the years, and I was so impressed with the job Masterpiece Tours and the Allen High School band staff did to pull this trip off without any incidents," said Jeff Turner, fine arts director and a trip chaperone. "Everything was so meticulously organized. This is not an easy when you are traveling with 700 students! Bravo!"

Hinton struggled to choose a single memorable experience. "I would lean toward the parade itself! With 800,000 spectators lining the parade route, cheering our band, colorguard and drill team with applause and well-wishes—plus the surprise on their faces when they realized the size of the Escadrille—it was very memorable."

Hundreds of family and friends joined the group, Hinton added, and 450 of them used Masterpiece Tours. More than 1,000 grandstand tickets were sold in the Allen block for the Tournament of Roses Parade. "Everything is bigger in Texas!"

The Escadrille leaders and students appreciated sharing their musicianship and showmanship with the world. "This is definitely a bucket list item. For those who work hard each and every day to perform for others, there is not a better venture than the Tournament of Roses Parade."

**The Escadrille wants to thank the family and friends who helped make the trip possible. Without their love and support, they wouldn't be able to experience the many things in which they're blessed to participate—from Friday night football halftime performances to national television. Thank you, Mom and Dad!**