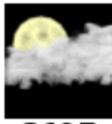


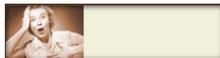


Janesville



36°F
SSE 7 MPH
Click for forecast
www.wx4u.com

classifieds
Place an ad online!



Fife and drum corps recruiting for 32nd season

By Eric Kuznacic
Staff Writer



JANESVILLE — Josh LeHuray has, pardon the pun, been beating the same drum for 18 years now and has no intention of stopping.

The Janesville man, now 28, has been a member of the Janesville Fife and Drum Corps

since the age of 10. The corps is a throwback to pre-Revolutionary War times, when skirmishes were fought one shot at a time and fife players and drummers were used to communicate between warring factions.

While he was initially drawn to the group by his love of music, he has found the corps provides camaraderie, educational experiences and the opportunity to see other parts of the state and nation.

“ I love doing it,” LeHuray said. “ It has become like one big family over the years.”

The corps currently has about 25 participants, including drummers, fife players, buglers and the color-guard. Its members range in age from their early teens on up, and some families

Browse
csi
Special Sections
CLICK HERE

Frank's
COUNTY MARKET
[Click here](#) for Franks ads running 03/18-03/24 (requires [Acrobat Reader](#))

boast members from multiple generations.

Director Bill Williams, a former social studies teacher for the School District of Janesville, has led the group since its inception in 1975, when it formed to help celebrate America's bicentennial the following year. The group's members enjoyed the experience so much they decided to continue performing.

"It was supposed to be a one-year thing, but we kept going," Williams said. "I've been in charge ever since."

The corps performs at about 30 functions annually across Wisconsin and the Midwest, including parades, re-enactments and even a Christmas-time dinner theater. Many of their stops are annual destinations. Locally, the corps marches in Janesville's Memorial Day parade and during the Laborfest parade in September.

Their performances are very similar to what one might have seen in the 18th century. Dressed in replicas of the uniforms worn by the First Virginia Regiment from 1754 to 1762, the corps' playlist includes 40-plus songs from that era. It is led by a color guard that follows 250-year-old drills.

The group has consistently had two- to three-dozen members, but has found it more difficult to recruit members in recent years. One of the group's founders, Larry Lefevre, was a music teacher in the Janesville school system, but has since retired.

"It's harder to find members now that we don't have that direct connection with a music program," LeHuray said.

Williams spent this week talking to sixth- and seventh-grade band members at Janesville's three middle schools hoping to find new recruits. He used to visit with older students as well, but found they had trouble committing.

"The older kids have made commitments to sports and other activities, so they don't have the time to practice and travel with us," Williams said.

The drum and fife corps is essentially self-sufficient, Williams said. The only cost to corps members is a small uniform deposit. Travel expenses are paid for largely through fees charged to parade and event organizers. The few events that do not pay for themselves are supplemented by fund-raisers held in the months the group doesn't travel or perform (see related graphic).

Those who join the corps have a unique opportunity to learn about the nation's history first-hand, Williams said. Musicians are tested before they can perform, and color-guard members are tested about their role within the guard as well as on the drills it performs. Often, this helps the younger members when it comes

time to take an American history course in school. One example of this is color guard member David Wollslair, a sophomore at Parker High School.

“ I’ ve always been interested in military history, but I have learned a lot more (being in the corps),” he said. “ It has helped my social studies grades.”

Ditto for Joe Henke, an eighth-grader at Marshall Middle School.

“ I had to do a report on the Revolutionary War ...and I got an A-plus,” Henke said. “ It’ s the only class I’ m getting an A-plus in.”

While participating in the fife and drum corps is a positive experience, there is at least one drawback. The uniforms are made of cotton and the jackets are made of wool, making them insufferably hot during the summer heat.

“ Some of them want to get out of that uniform ASAP,” Williams said with a laugh.

[Back To Top](#)