

Pipe Band enjoys year to remember

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Staff Writer

Although the Georgetown Pipe Band has been a familiar addition to local parades and events for 65 years, it was their 65th year that allowed the band to shine.

For the first time in the band's history, the Grade Four outfit has won the distinction of Champion Supreme for 2007—the best band in its grade in Ontario.

This honour comes as a result of winning numerous competitions across Ontario during the 2007 competition season.

Among the competitions the band placed first place in were the Alma, Michigan Highland Games (May 26), Alma, Michigan U.S. Open Championships (May 27), Sarnia Highland Games—Canadian Championships (June 16), Kincardine Highland Games (July 7), Chatham Highland Games (July 14), Cambridge Highland Games (July 21). The band was second at the Georgetown Highland Games (June 9).

But by far, the biggest achievement was winning the North American Championship at the Glengarry North American Championship held in Maxville, Ontario, Aug. 4. The band competed against top North American bands from western and eastern Canada as well as from the U.S.

Pipe major Tracy Porter is delighted with the band's successes this year. A member since 1968, she has seen the ups and downs of the band during that time and feels very proud of the band's accomplishments, especially since they happened in the band's 65th year.

"Over the last few years the band has worked hard to improve its sound and each individual has improved their playing," said Porter. "We had so much individual and group practice, as well as strong motivation and great team spirit."

"The band now has 35 members," said Porter, "and it is a fantastic group who have all come together to make it happen."

"We have a number of youth playing with us now as well and they have given us new blood and with it, more enthusiasm. I think the kids have made the rest of us younger in the process."

Drummer Paula Harper agrees. "I have two teenage sons piping in the band," said Harper, "the band gives us a wonderful opportunity to play and do something together—we have a good time, and it's also good family time, too."

Megan Sparks, 17, finds the band a time to have "lots of fun at the competitions, and also meet lots of kids my own age."

Sixteen-year-old piper Cameron Perry has been playing five years and has been a band member for four years.

"It was nice to win this year," said Perry, "Maxville was certainly the highlight of the year, and winning the North American champi-

onship isn't something that happens often. I was just excited to be part of it."

Tenor drummer Cheryl Da Ponte has been with the band 20 years.

"Just winning this year made all the time and money spent over the years worth it," said Da Ponte, "I was so moved I was bawling like a baby in Maxville. It was such a powerful feeling."

For piper Bob Brawley, 2007 was a great year for a number of reasons.

"I came back to piping after 25 years off," said Brawley, "And now I know I couldn't have picked a better year. Seeing this band accomplish what we did this year made the return that much more significant."

Porter also credits band instructors Tom Anderson (piping) and Graham Kirwood (drumming) for providing strong coaching, direction and support. Both instructors have distinguished reputations as fine players, leaders and judges.

Anderson has worked with the

group for the past three years, and said the win was quite rewarding for him.

"They all came together as a committed group," said Anderson, "And it paid off. I watched them traveling great distances to get together as both individuals and as groups to put in extra practices. It's commitment like that that creates winning bands—and Georgetown (Pipe Band) certainly had it this year."

Anderson is in a good position to judge—he has coached and played with some of the top Grade 1 bands in the world, including Renfrew and British Caledonia Airways in Scotland, the now defunct Glenmore of Toronto and the Peel Regional Police Pipe Band.

He also played in the 78th Fraser Highlanders in 1987—the first Canadian band to win a world championship.

For longest-serving member Gail Bennett, it's a very special, but bittersweet year.

A member since 1963, Bennett has decided that 2007 will be her



Georgetown Pipe Band drummer Paula Harper shows her enthusiasm as she practises with the band at the Lion's Hall

Photo by Ted Brown

last year with the band.

"I guess I could say that I'm going out with a bang," said Bennett, "Camaraderie in the band was the best I've ever seen, and that was certainly the recipe for success. To accomplish so much, and do it in the 65th year of the band—I'm simply proud beyond words to have been a part of it."

After winning so much this past year, the question is where does the band go from here?

Porter says this year's success has certainly made the band members eager to continue the group's development and hopefully compete at higher levels.

"We're always looking for more talent too," said Porter, "Finishing on such a high note makes us want to be even better next year."

The band practices Thursday nights at the Lions Hall in Georgetown. Any one interested in more information can contact Porter at porterte@rogers.com for details.



Members of the Georgetown Pipe Band get in some practice recently. The band celebrated its 65th year in style winning the distinction of Champion Supreme for 2007 as the best band in its class in Ontario.

Photo by Ted Brown

Hornby residents share frustrations about well conditions

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Dennis said there is "no question there's been substantial siltation in a number of wells."

He said the Region intends to take steps to remedy that, and stressed the Region is committed to restoring wells to their condition prior to the work on the pumping station.

"I can't even get a commitment out of him (Region staff member) to repair the damage to my filters. You haven't even purged my hot water tank," said an angry McKee.

"That lady (Waters) will never see her dishwasher," he said.

Dennis said the Region is addressing McKee's issues with his water and had just recently received a price quotation to undertake the work he had requested.

Another resident complained that she's had to throw out two sets of towels because they had bleach stains on them and asked how much chlorine was in the water being trucked to their homes.

Dennis said it was the same water all residents of south Halton were drinking and Halton's Manager of Special Projects, David Ohashi, said the chlorine level was 1.5 parts per million.

The woman wondered if the water haulers were using chlorine or bleach to dis-

infect their tanks and Ken Lawday of the Hornby Association of Ratepayers, which co-hosted the meeting with Halton Region, suggested Region staff speak to the haulers about that.

A couple of residents raised concerns that the water tanks on their front lawn was lowering their property values and Dennis responded the Region was working as quickly as possible to get them removed. He wouldn't acknowledge the tanks had affected property values to an outbreak of laughter from the residents.

"I can't imagine how a temporary water tank would have a permanent impact on the value of your property," said Dennis.

At the meeting, Region staff told residents that their intent was to reconnect the majority of the approximately 56 affected wells by December 15 and for those that can't be reconnected yet because their water has not recovered sufficiently, heat tracing will be provided to ensure the pumps don't freeze. Staff said the region would cover hydro costs for the heat trace.

Regional Councillor Clark Somerville said he didn't "blame people for being frustrated."

He said while he feels Region staff has communicated well with Hornby area residents, "I've felt frustrated as a councillor in finding out what's going on," said Somerville.

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