

Nation's oldest marching band celebrates 70th anniversary

BY DANIEL SCHWAB

Brad Switzer wouldn't know what to do on Thursday nights if it wasn't for the Kingsville-Essex Associated Band.

Switzer has been with Canada's oldest marching band off and on for 30 years. In that time he's blown trumpets, French horns, banged drums, played for the Queen of England and served as assistant band director.

"It's just what I've always done," Switzer said modestly before a band practice last week at Kingsville District High School.

Three of his kids have played with the band, a tradition that has continued for generations for more than one family involved in the group.

Sylvia Hyland has four grandchildren in the band. Hyland herself has played piano and joined the band committee 32 years ago.

"There are a lot of younger kids now, some of the most dedicated musicians," Hyland says. "People who love music."

The love of marching band music among local families and group members stretches back to 1937.

Essex merchant Charles Maedel and bandleader E.L. Robinson started the first outfit of its kind in Essex County, calling it The Essex Boys Band.



Trumpet players of the Kingsville-Essex Associated Band belt out a tune during a practice last week. The band is celebrating its 70th anniversary this year and hopes to raise enough money to perform at the Calgary Stampede in July.

From humble beginnings and a handful of members the band started to grow in size throughout the 1940s and '50s, adding more instrumentation and tunes to their repertoire.

In the early 1970s, Jim Barnett took over for Robinson and the band started entering competitions. They became one of the first groups in Canada to compete in the Michigan short circuit tour using drills, music and marching techniques. Band camps also began to spring up around Essex and Kingsville at that time.

In the '80s, several veteran band members left and the group struggled to keep it together. Over the years, dedicated local musicians such as Bill Brown, Tony Malkowski, Grant Bergeron and Rosemary Borland

brought life back into the group.

Now, the band performs about 25 concerts and parades per year.

Band members have taken their instruments and songbooks everywhere, from the Cherry Festival in Traverse City, Mich. to Parliament Hill in Ottawa.

Band president Scott Shuttleworth said dedication and a love for music is what keeps the group together.

"It gets in your blood," said Shuttleworth, a sousaphone player. "There's just so much music out there. We've got five filing cabinets full of sheet music. We usually try to add three new songs a year and add them to the rest."

Shuttleworth says the group has lately been getting into some more modern

music, while still incorporating a few of the older sousa-marches into their set.

To commemorate their 70th anniversary, the band is hoping to bring their repertoire to the Calgary Stampede this July.

A group representative has already met with Kingsville and Essex town councils to ask for an extra \$5,000 from each.

Shuttleworth said it's going to cost roughly \$70,000 to fly about 100 performers and chaperones to the city for five days.

The two town councils promised to take the request to their budget deliberations expected to take place later this month.

"We're going to need a little bit of help," Shuttleworth said. "We'll need some donations but we've been putting money

away from fundraising for about a year and a half now. We want all our members to

go, put our band on the street in Calgary and have a really good time."

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Influenza A cases reported

There are five confirmed cases of influenza A virus in Windsor-Essex. Four cases were identified in Windsor and one in Leamington.

Dr. Allen Heimann, Medical Officer of Health for Windsor-Essex would like to remind everyone that we are in the middle of flu season, and it is not too late to get a flu shot if you have not already done so. The peak of flu season in Canada occurs between November and April.

Influenza is highly contagious and can spread quickly through a community. The chance of spread decreases significantly when as many people as possible are immunized against the flu.

Dr. Heimann also recommends that everyone wash their hands regularly with soap and warm water, and cover a cough or sneeze with a tissue or the inside of your elbow to further reduce the spread of the flu virus and other illnesses.

Smoke Free Ontario Act Year End Update

As of Dec. 31, 2006, the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit enforcement staff have issued a total of 68 tobacco related charges to owners, managers, and operators of public places and workplaces in Windsor-Essex County under the Smoke Free Ontario Act.

Deb Bennett, director of health protection, says "the Health Unit has only charged operators and owners after they have been provided with clear direction as to the

requirements of the legislation and were given a reasonable time frame in which compliance was expected."

For information on SFOA, call 519-258-2146, ext. 3218.

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