

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Portland Adult Marching Band Headed to Inaugural Parade

Portland, Oregon - January 1, 2009 – Portland’s most active and best-traveled all-adult marching band has found the perfect way to launch its fifteenth anniversary season – marching down Pennsylvania Avenue. On January 20, the Get a Life Marching Band of Portland, Oregon will join approximately 100 other units from around the country in the Presidential Inaugural Parade in Washington, DC.

The band hails from all around the Portland and Southwest Washington metro area and ranges in age from 20’s to 60’s. “Our members have three things in common,” notes GAL Founder and Executive Director Bob Pulido. “We were all in high school or college marching bands; we still haven’t gotten over it; and we’d rather miss a note than a meal!” GAL is known to Oregon and national audiences for its spontaneity on the parade route and ability to engage parade crowds using sing-alongs, humor, and “just for you” solo performances. Pulido adds, “Our goal is to send each audience member home with a special and unexpected memory!”

Steve Tolopka, GAL’s Music Director, still can’t quite believe the group’s good fortune. “The Presidential Inaugural Committee received a record 1382 applications for the parade this year, so we are awestruck and deeply honored to be among the lucky few with an invitation to this historic event. But we knew our high-energy, brassy, funky rock and roll style would be different from anyone else applying to the parade. We may be a marching band, but that doesn’t mean we play Sousa!”

Part of the band’s appeal to the Committee may be that it reaches well beyond the Northwest. Members are traveling from the states of Washington, Arizona, Ohio, Florida, Nevada, and South Dakota to join the merrymaking. This combination of local identity and national reach fueled the band’s choice of music for the presidential reviewing stand – a medley of “We’re An American Band” and the Northwest anthem “Louie Louie”.

The group is scrambling to prepare for the trip since it only recently learned of its selection. Tolopka tells the story: “We applied for the parade back in November but learned in early December that we hadn’t made the cut, so we resigned ourselves to planning for 2013. Then three days ago I was sitting by my brother’s pool in Orlando over Christmas break when our cell phone rang. When I discovered it was the Inaugural Committee inviting us to replace another group that dropped out of the parade, I was so excited I almost dropped the phone.”

The result is that Director of Operations Tom Higham is working feverishly to transport 100+ band and family members to the East Coast. With as many as 4 million people expected to invade Washington on Inauguration Day, transportation and lodging in the city have long since vanished. “Our best alternative was Philadelphia, so that’s where we’re headed,” says Higham. “We snagged the last two motor coaches in the entire city of Philadelphia for our three-hour bus ride to DC on Parade Day!”

The last-minute opportunity has the band gearing up for something else it rarely does: fund-raising. Band members normally defray their own travel expenses, but the short notice and sagging economy have the group looking for angels. “It will take nearly eighty thousand dollars to get to the Inauguration so we’re grateful for any assistance, large or small,” says Pulido. Donations can be made at www.getalifemb.org, where the audio and video submissions from the band’s parade applications are also available for online viewing.

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The band loves entertaining crowds and making music but also knows which side its bread is buttered on. Annual band mottos have included:

- We'd Rather Drop a Tuba than a Fork;
- We're an Eating Band with a Marching Disorder;
- Still Eating After All These Years (the 10th Anniversary slogan); and
- Are You Gonna Eat That???

In addition to numerous local performances including the 2007 Sweepstakes Award in the Long Beach Loyalty Days Parade, the Get a Life Marching Band has performed in Walt Disney World and Disneyland, San Antonio's Fiesta Flambeau Parade, Tampa's Gasparilla Pirate Parade, the Pasadena Doo Dah Parade, Seattle SEAFAIR Torchlight Parade, the Boise River Festival, and Queen Victoria Days in Victoria, British Columbia. The group has been featured on National Public Radio and in *Making Music Magazine*, and is slated to appear in the Southwest Airlines Chinese New Year Parade in San Francisco on February 7.

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Photos follow on next two pages

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Get a Life Marching Band
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