

#SherrardRoars

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We Inspire We Empower We Prepare

Oct. - Dec. 2018



Sherrard students take lead to honor veterans



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Upcoming Events

- Jan. 9 - Back to School!
- Jan. 16 - 6 p.m. School Board Mtg.
- Jan. 19 - Tiger Tip Off 4-6 Grade Boys
- Jan. 21 - No School Martin Luther King Jr Day
- Feb. 14/15 - 7 p.m. Variety Show @ Sherrard HS
- Feb. 16 - Tiger Tip Off 4-6 Grade Girls
- Feb. 18 - No School President's Day
- Feb. 20 - 6 p.m. School Board Mtg.
- Feb. 23 - Tiger Tip Off 7-8 Grade Boys
- Feb. 26 - 8 - 1p.m. Blood Drive @ High School
- Feb. 28 - 9- 10 a.m. Visiting Artist Series - Greg Kennedy @ Mather-ville Intermediate
- March 2 - 7 -10 p.m. HS Sadies Dance
- March 5 - 5:30 p.m. HS Meet The Teams
- March 7 - JH/HS Band Concert @ HS - Time TBD
- March 9 - HS Spring Sports Pics - Time TBD
- March 13 - JH/HS Jazz Band Concert @HS - Time TBD
- March 15 - No School Parent Teacher Conferences
- March 16 - 7 p.m. SAF Trivia Night @ HS
- March - 18-22 Spring Break
- March 20 - 6 p.m. School Board Mtg.
- March 30 - Jazz Showcase @ HS, Time TBD



The Sherrard National Honor Society presented a plaque as a gift of 'thanks' to Colonel Bradley Cook for accepting their invitation to speak during the schools Veterans Day Assembly. Left to right: Joelle Gallagher, Casey Jacobs, Colonel Bradley Cook, Ian Ausdal, Emily Mooney, Ben Kissner, and Ethan Schmelzer

The Sherrard School district, like many area schools - held a Veterans Day assembly Friday, Nov. 9. This was the second year the assembly was entirely student-organized - by Sherrard's National Honor Society.

School Board President Rhys Fullerlove said, "I'm very proud... they ran it from initial planning, to inviting, to lining up the keynote speaker. It was wholeheartedly done by the students with very little oversight by teachers or administrators - or anybody else - they really made it their own and they took it and ran with it.

"It's the little touches they've done this year that really wowed me."

National Honor Society President Joelle Gallagher, Sherrard Senior, said it was a school-wide effort.

As veterans and their families entered the school, FFA students lined the entrance holding flags, cardboard cutouts of alum veterans lined the walkway. The art club had available tokens of appreciation for Veterans to take, and metal fabrication class students had a black and white metal flag on display they created. Veterans put their name in and one was drawn to take it home - Wayne Mahoney won the prize.

Sherrard student Payton Wilson sang the National Anthem.

The school-wide collaboration included several patriotic songs performed by the high school band - including a medley of service songs from each branch of the military arranged by Director of Bands, Sherrard teacher David Grayson. Veterans were asked to stand when their branch was played.

A short film produced by the Sherrard Television Media Productions class was shown.

Gallagher said 40-50 veterans were signed up in advance, but anyone who showed up was added to the list of those honored.

High School Principal Tim Wernentin intro-

Athletic Calender

To see team rosters, team photos, game schedules, event locations and more visit: <http://il.8to18.com/SherrardHS>

Sign up for updates:
•Go to the athletic calendar
•E-Mail Alert - on the right side of the page and click the "Click to Join" link

•Then, "Create New Account"

•Select the sports that you would like to receive email alerts about and click - "Add Selected Sports" button

Also search the Sherrard Boosters Facebook group to stay connected.

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duced his former student from Bettendorf Middle School - keynote speaker, U.S. Army Colonel Bradley Cook, Deputy Chief of Staff for Information Management/Chief Information Officer at the Rock Island Arsenal' U.S. Army Sustainment Command.

"It is my hope that this ceremony is a small token of thanks to the courageous men and women past and present for the sacrifices that continue to be made to protect this wonderful country of ours," said Wernentin.

Continued on Page 2



Continued from Page 1

Colonel Cook told the assembly, "Regardless of the military branch in which our veterans have served - this day belongs to them. The generations of patriots who have dedicated themselves to the defense of our country made us stronger and more resilient as a nation."

Cook said it's important we thank not only those who served, but also their families, "for they, too, have served and sacrificed for our nation."

They have lived uncommon lives under a common banner - A love of country and service to our nation."

Rich Barber, Army Veteran who served as a military policeman has attended Sherrard's Veterans assemblies the past several years.

"I think it's a great program. The students need



Right to left: Keynote speaker U.S. Army Colonel Bradley Cook, Sherrard School Board President Rhys Fullerlove, State Representative 74th District Dan Swanson, State Representative 72nd District Mike Halpin, and Sherrard Superintendent Alan Boucher.

to know that somebody is there - as in the past - served their country. Whether they served in combat or not. As veterans, we're all equal," he said.

Still serving, Barber arrived to the ceremony following his duties with the Honor Guard for a funeral through the American Legion Post

200, Rock Island.

Cook said, "I love coming to the smaller towns because I know they really appreciate having the support, I try to do it every time I can. It is an honor to be out here today."

Special Guests in attendance included keynote speaker Colonel Bradley Cook, Rep. dan Swanson, Rep Mike Halpin, Ellie LaBotte on behalf of U.S. Rep. Cheri Bustos, and Brenda and Leonard Luxmore parents of 2005 SHS graduate CPL Bryant "BJ" Luxmore, killed in action in 2012.



The Sherrard FFA students drew a name during the Veterans Day assembly Friday, Nov. 9 for the metal flag created by the Ag Metal Fabrication Class. The winner was Wayne Mahoney.



Keynote speaker U.S. Army Colonel Bradley Cook told those gathered, "Regardless of the military branch in which our veterans have served - this day belongs to them."



Left - FFA students gave Veterans a hero's welcome as they arrived at Sherrard High School for the ceremony.

Elementary Students learn the meaning of Veterans Day

In place of a day off - Elementary and Intermediate school children celebrated Veterans Day with an assembly honoring more than 100 veterans Monday, Nov. 12.

Approximately 700 students K-6th grade in the Sherrard School District were gathered in the gym at hosting school - Matherville Intermediate.

Winola Elementary and Sherrard Grade students were bussed in to attend.

Veterans names and branches of service were announced as they were escorted into the gym by students.

State Representative Dan Swanson spoke to the students about what it means to be a Veteran and the importance of thanking them everyday - not just on Veterans Day.

"Ask them what they

did in their branch of service.... They all have a story they would like to share with you."

"We all appreciate all ages telling us thank you - it's certainly been an honor."

He also thanked the Veterans in attendance, "It takes a lot of courage to put the uniform on." Swanson is a Lieutenant Colonel, (retired) Army National Guard.

He presented an Illinois flag that flew over the State Capitol to, 87 year old Veteran - Gordon Cooper - who was escorted by five great grandkids that attend Sherrard schools.

Children from each grade read a poem or essay honoring those present.

The ceremony lasted just over an hour ending with the school children singing the Military U.S.

Medley for each branch of service.

Veterans were recognized a final time when the entire gym full of children, parents and teachers clapped in their honor.



All Sherrard District Elementary students gathered at Matherville Intermediate to honor Veterans on Monday Nov. 12, in lieu of a day off.



Above: Children stand to recite the Pledge of Allegiance as lead by the district Cub Scouts.

Below: Before the ceremony Cub Scouts prepare to march the flag into the gym.



'Focus on your dreams,' advises Q-C area teen who found stardom



Haley is as diverse as she is talented. Before auditioning for the part of Emma, she was Miss Illinois Outstanding Preteen in 2013. She has competed in several pageants and has been named Little Miss Mercer County 2010, Junior Miss Mercer County 2016, Miss Quad Cities Outstanding Teen 2018 and placed top 5 at Miss Illinois in June. She currently holds the title of Miss Quad Cities Outstanding Teen and will compete next summer for Miss Illinois Outstanding Teen.

Sherrard student and celebrity actress, 16 year old Laila Haley, signed autographs in Ottumwa, Iowa for Halloweenapalooza. Haley, was invited to the festival for a viewing of Sinister 2, followed by audience Q & A Friday night for the festival's feature presentation.

In the film she plays ghostly child, Emma, who torments children who move into a rural farmhouse alongside a demonic entity that persuades children to murder their families.

She was just 12 years old during the filming of the picture. It was the first movie audition she had ever went to - and she landed the role.

"I was confident I was a good actress, I was still really young and inexperienced. I went into it to do my best and see what happened." She said thousands of kids tried out for the part. Haley has been in numerous musicals and plays around the Quad Cities area since the age of 7.

"In my audition they told me I was terrifying, so I wasn't sure how to react to that at first," she laughed. "If my normal face is scary... what is this makeup going to do to me? It turned out really cool."

Her favorite part of filming, aside from acting, was the special effects.

"On set I got to sit for about three hours to get my face all done in these crazy latex cracks," she said the long process was worth the wait to see the end product.

The movie was filmed over the course of a year in Chicago - and two weeks in L.A.

"The L.A. crew got tired of being in Illinois because of our weather. The one scene

we didn't film in Chicago was the scene with the cornfield. They ended up shipping corn to L.A. to do the scene!" She said her and the other Chicagoland actors laughed about that on set.

As a young kid filming a horror movie, Haley said the scariest part was seeing the demonic character Bughuul while getting makeup done. She said the light from his phone while he played Candy Crush cast an ominous glow on his face, "It was terrifying! We were all so little. The youngest of us was 8. It turned out to be fun, not scary."

Haley said it was difficult, at first, to navigate the cult following she had garnered because of her role.

"A lot of the kids and I, we had never dealt with having people know about us outside of our hometown." She said she was contacted by people from all over the world, particularly Malaysia, via Facebook and Instagram. At the time she wasn't involved with social media and others tried to create accounts impersonating her.

"It was kind of scary, but once we got it all figured out it was really cool. It kind of amplified what my platform was and what I could do with that social impact."

Haley said she now has friends from several other countries.

Since it's release in August, 2015 Haley has done two local films, horror movie, Overdue, and another one by director Stephen Folker that she is not yet able to divulge.

"Overdue is another scary movie, about a librarian that goes rogue and starts murdering people with overdue books," she said.

Last summer she released her first fully illustrated children's book, 'Super Heart Heroes ABC's' as part of her awareness and fundraising initiative, 'Show us your heart'. It's a cause close to her heart intended to teach children how to take care of their heart, and the consequences of not doing so.

She plans to attend Savannah College of Art and Design and become a children's book illustrator. "So I can continue illustrating children's books about important issues but in a fun way that gets kids involved in a way they aren't even knowing they are learning, they're just having fun," she said.

The book teaches children to take care of their hearts in a fun, exciting way.

As a young child, her aunt passed away at only 27 of congestive heart failure, and more recently her father narrowly survived a heart attack.

"It's been something that we've, unfortunately, had to deal with a lot in our lives... And I don't want other families to have to deal with that, especially kids."

"If you reach someone at a young age then they can grow up taking care of themselves and live a happier, healthier, more heart-awesome life," she said, "That's what 'Show Us Your Heart' is about."

Her book is available on Amazon and is in the Viola Library system. Proceeds go to donating a copy of the book to a hospital, library or elementary school. "We've been able to do that a lot recently, which has been amazing."

Another fundraiser she conducts is, 'Faces by Laila' - she attends events and paints children's faces by donation. Proceeds then go to the Chil-

dren's Miracle Network - she has raised almost \$900 since last summer.

"It's something I can do that connects with and helps children that also raises money for children," she said.

In the spring she does an 'Egg my house' fundraiser. Her and her family fill plastic eggs with candy and hide them outside the homes of those who donate for the amount of eggs they request.

"We're sort of the easter bunnies, I call it the 'bunny brigade'," she laughed.

Currently, Haley is student directing the play Radium Girls at Sherrard High School. Performances are Friday and Saturday in the high school auditorium at 7 p.m. She plans to be in the winter play, Almost Maine, and audition for the spring play.

"I've been doing theater at Sherrard since I was in First or Second grade... I do a lot of theater at Sherrard." She said she has also done costume and prop design at the school.

Now, she's supporting little sister Marley Haley, 11, sixth grader at Matherville Intermediate, as she pursues her own entertainment endeavors. The younger Haley has appeared in a Dairy Queen commercial and an episode of Law and Order SVU. She even auditioned in front of Steven Spielberg for Jurassic World 2, "She was the

top person in America to be considered for casting," Haley said a child from England was chosen for the role instead.

"Marley's incredible. I'm so proud of her, I love her, she's amazing."

Haley hopes to continue her acting career - but she said at her age it's difficult to find roles. "Hollywood doesn't typically cast teenagers as teenage rolls, they do adults in teenage rolls...but we're still looking - I love acting, it's one of my passions, so I'll continue to do it.

As a Sherrard student, and Viola resident, she is a role model. Her advice to the next generation is, "Nothing is impossible. And that sounds so cliché, but it isn't. If you look for the opportunities and keep your mind opened and your heart focused on your dreams, anything is really possible."

She said when she was heading to that first audition, "I didn't think it was possible and it ended up happening." She said as long as you keep focus on your dreams, and visualize your future, you can achieve your dreams. "You just gotta keep working."

"It changed the course of how my life has gone and I love it."

Follow Laila Haley on her professional acting instagram at Lailahaley_official, and her art instagram at @loveelcee.



Feeding students a serving of smiles at Sherrard Grade School

Sherrard - During lunch Sherrard Elementary kitchen staff placed handwritten notes of encouragement at each students seat, Nov. 19. Supervisor Kitchen Aid Kathy Slattery wrote each of the 267 students a personalized, encouraging note before Thanksgiving break.

Slattery has spent 27 years at Sherrard, in various positions, in-

cluding the lunch room for the past 20 years. She said the idea came from conversation with co-workers Belinda Rind, head cook and Rhonda Thompson, assistant cook about the excitement it brings to children who receive

notes in their cold lunches from parents. "They often want me to read them with a smile and twinkle in their eyes," she said.

Slattery wanted every student to experience that excitement.

When students arrived to find the notes in the cafeteria they exclaimed excitedly. Shouts of,

wanted you to know how very special you are... They care about you." When she said they can take their notes home the cafeteria erupted with cheers followed by several happy "Thank you!"s'.

Fourth grader Adalynn Thomas said, "I love these notes because they inspire you, and they are generous."

"It made me feel good because I'm glad that somebody actually thought about me, and how they like me, and what they think about me," said fourth grader Tessa Driessens.

Slattery said the kitchen staff always looks for ways to do something special for the kids.

She said during Halloween Rind gave each student a fruit snack - and another time Thompson gave out stickers and lunch bags.

"Anything we can do to brighten kids days, we go for it," said Slattery.

"We talk about different things we can do, even for the teachers - to keep them going," said Rind.

Slattery said it's a trickle down effect. She said just last week Superin-

terintendent Alan Boucher emailed staff thanking them for their service to the district. Principal Konnie Fry frequently sends updates to staff with words of gratitude and encouragement.

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"We're very very fortunate to work here." She said of her coworkers, "The lord brought us together."

Rind and Thompson more recently began working for the district. Previously, both worked in retail for 30 years.

"This here is a piece of heaven," said Thompson. She started in February as a substitute before moving to assistant cook.

Rind has been with the district for two years. "Coming here was a total different change, it's so refreshing, so enjoyable... You have an impact."

"The kids have their bad days - we give them a smile and pretty soon they're smiling," she said.

Fry said she is proud of kitchen staff for taking

initiative to go the extra mile. "We try to be a very positive and meaningful building with each other and especially with our children."

"I'm proud of the kitchen staff and proud of the whole culture of the building that we foster."

Humbly, Slattery said, "The teachers are the real heroes - We are very fortunate. I don't say that because I'm an employee - I have grand-kids that go here."

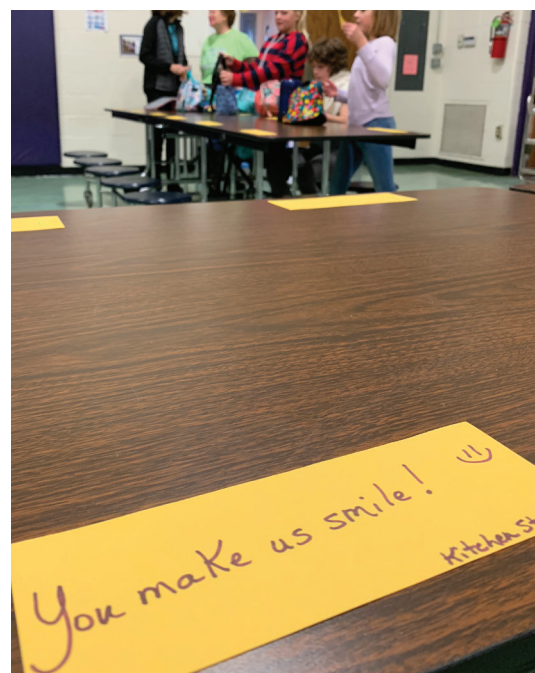
"We can all make a difference every day in small way."



cluding the lunch room for the past 20 years. She said the idea came from conversation with co-workers Belinda Rind, head cook and Rhonda Thompson, assistant cook about the excitement it brings to children who receive

"Hey, I'm awesome!", and "They're proud of me?" could be heard among the chatter and laughter. The kids wanted to know what their friends notes said.

Principal Konnie Fry told students, "The staff



Kids and Cops helps struggling Coyne Center family

Rock Island County Sheriff's Deputies took kids shopping for Christmas Tuesday, Dec. 11. The department fund-raises for the Cops and Kids for Christmas program throughout the year. This year's campaign brought in \$8,000 to benefit 47 kids and their families.

At 4 p.m. at the Walmart in Silvis, the uniformed deputies escorted kids up and down toy aisles, the clothing and shoes department, and even the home goods area - and back again, as they shopped for their families and crossed everyone off their Christmas list.

Organizer and Riverdale Resource Officer Jim Miller said providing the opportunity for kids to buy for their families is good for the kids, "Sometimes we think it's just about buying for the kids, sometimes the kids really see the parents hurting and they don't know how to help, and that's a way that we can come alongside those kids and say, 'let us help those parents and let us give back to them.'

If we can put a smile on

mom or dad's face during Christmas, we can put a smile on the kid's face. That's a huge part of it."

The kids end by choosing gifts for themselves.

This year, four extra special guests were in attendance. Among the 14 kids from the Sherrard School district, Resource Officer Mike Mendoza was sure to include the Alexander kids - whose family lost their home in a fire the Saturday after Thanksgiving.

"When we were made aware of the fire, we reached out to Deanna to see if there's anything she or her family needed." Mendoza said the kids wished they had some of their toys to play with they lost in the fire, "I spoke with some of the boys and asked, if there's anything in the house they wished they had, one said Pokemon cards, one said games... toys in general."

When Deanna Alexander and her four children piled into her vehicle on Nov. 25 to head back to her home in Coyne Center, her car wouldn't start. With no success diagnosing the issue,

she called it a night and decided to stay the night there - at her boyfriend's house.

She was awoken around 2 a.m. with the news that her Woodland Park trailer was on fire, and crews asked her to come right away. She told them her car wouldn't start and she would have to wait for a ride the following morning.

The next morning, she was stunned when her car started with no trouble. She said had they made it home the previous night, it would have been fatal.

"(Coyne Center Fire Marshal) said there was an explosion in my room - where my daughter and I share a room together. And it was right by the gas line. He's not saying it was the gas



line, but it's just undetermined at this point," she said.

The Alexander family experienced a miracle that night. And also a curse. Through tears in her eyes, Deanna said she is thankful her and her children are alive; now they mourn the loss of everything.

Dakota, 11, twins Dawson and Deaken, 8, and Derek, 6 attend Sherrard schools.

"They all gave us gift cards to Walmart, Hy-vee, they gave us clothes, backpacks... they said anything that we need, let them know - They were very kind and caring."

Clothing and essentials for the family were readily available through Sherrard School's newly implemented Tiger Closet, an initiative to confront students' needs. Since last summer they have collected gently used

items so students can 'shop' when they have a need.

Mendoza knew how he could help when Alexander told him they had enough clothing, but the children missed playing with their toys.

It was an emotional experience for Alexander.

"This program means a lot. I was already struggling, being single with four kids is hard. I'm so grateful and thankful from the bottom of my heart," she said.

Miller said he's been involved in the program for nine years.

"It's gradually grown over the years," he said kids from rural Rock Island County schools are included, Riverdale, Sherrard, Rockridge, Eagle Ridge, and Bethany Blackhawk Phoenix.

"We've also started reaching out into homes and people that are in need. In a couple weeks going to do six kids that just need clothes," he said deputies will take them shopping for new clothing and hygiene items.

Continued on Page 7



Deanna Alexander and her children, Deagen, Derek, Dawson and Dakota pictured with Sherrard Resource Officer Mike Mendoza (far left) and Sherrard Superintendent Alan Boucher (far right).



for others before themselves at such a young age.

In the garden center, volunteers lined tables and wrapped gifts with paper and tape donated by Walmart. Each year Walmart gives a grant to the program and donates a kid-friendly meal following the shopping spree.

Continued from Page 6

He said extending the program to include families' needs is possible with the support of Sheriff Jerry Bustos.

"We went to him and said we got some families really in need, he said, 'Do it.' We have that support down all the way through our ranks. They've got big

hearts. It's nice to work for command personnel who have hearts," said Miller.

Mendoza has been with the program for several years, he enjoys seeing disadvantaged kids put others first, "All the kids, it never fails, they want to make sure they get something for everybody else first. It's a cool thing how they're looking out

"Walmart has been phenomenal... We would not be able to that tonight without all these guys here at Walmart. Their management, is by far, some of the best," he said.

While there, Mendoza also purchased the family a few household needs when Alexander told him she was searching the rubble for kitchen items.

"It's very rewarding to see smiles on kids face, and tears in mother's eyes, when they're so appreciative of the police department... and giving back to a family in need in a time of crisis."

The Alexander family aren't strangers to starting over, "We moved here almost three years ago from Arizona and came with just a small U-haul, my kids and I shared three twin mattresses on the bedroom floor.

To be stuck with nothing again is pretty hard," said Deanna.

Currently, they are staying with her boyfriend until they can afford to a place to live.

Her most pressing need is to pay for removal of the trailer.

"It was a total loss... and I was uninsured, because the motor home was so old I couldn't get insurance," she said.

A local company gen-

erously offered to do the removal for free, however, she said the management company of Woodland Park, Hauck Homes, told her there was an issue with a license - and now she estimates that cost to be \$2,000 - \$4,000.

The community response to help the family was immediate, "I would just like to thank everybody, my friends, my family, Sherrard school, Matherville and the whole community in the Sherrard area and Coyne Center. They really were all there for us, we got clothes very quickly, shoes, and some other household items we needed.

I'm in awe, so grateful and thankful - I feel so blessed," said Alexander.



143 Sherrard Elementary students participated in the world record of cup stacking

The contest includes the entire United States and Canada and 23 other participating countries according to the World Sport Stacking Association's website, www.thewssa.com.

The worldwide goal is 635,000 participating stackers. In 2017 the total number was 578,704. The world record was set in 2016 at 622,809. So far, According to WSSA, the count is at 612,066 for

2018.

Mat Stannke, Elementary PE teacher said it gave the kids a chance to work together,

"They were really excited when they found it was a world record thing."

Kindergarten through fourth grade students tried their hand at various cup stacking techniques - stations were set up around the gym, each with a different objective. One station required cup stacking while in a push-up position. Other stations had varying sizes of cups from thimble size to large buckets. Several had students working

together.

"It's something fun to do - anytime they're excited, they're engaged and they want to participate and have a good time," said Stannke.

The kids saw videos from cup stacking competitions. The world record time of 1.3 seconds to stack three groups of three cups was set by Korean, Hyeon Jong

Choi, according to the WSSA website.

"We do it here because it builds hand-eye coordination," said Stannke.



Sherrard Junior in Macy's Day Parade on Thanksgiving Day

Sherrard Junior, Jared Hood, was forever immortalized when he marched with the historic Macy's Great American Marching Band on Thanksgiving Day, Nov. 22. In it's 92nd year, the parade began in 1924 and is seen by over 50 million viewers on NBC - and some 3 million attend live.

Hood, 1 of 11 tenor saxophone musicians marching in the MGAMB with a total of 185 students. They group, chosen from among the United States' finest high school musicians, marched about 3 miles and performed in Herald Square in front of Macy's department store.

He was the 3rd saxophone on the right in the second row - performing in the 92nd Macy's Day Parade.

Sherrard Director of Bands David Grayson was instrumental in helping Hood procure his spot. As soon as he received notice of the opening via email, because of his involvement in a prestigious drum major camp he attended the previous summer, Hood went to Grayson for guidance.

"I gave him a quick run through," Grayson said he knew details about the band from his previous director with the

Marching Illini who had directed the group.

He told Hood, "This would be a really cool opportunity... The top students from all over the country come together."

Grayson met with his parents, Steven and Julianne Hood right away to discuss details prior to sending in his application.

Hood's parents agreed to drive him to and from the hotel in New Jersey where he stayed with other students and chaperones.

He sent in his application in October which included an "etude", or solo, to demonstrate his abilities. When he received notice that he was accepted in the MGAMB the following week, he was surprised and excited.

"I didn't quite know what to feel, I didn't think I'd make it - but then I did," Hood said.

Grayson helped him prepare, "I was very excited for him - I think that's quite a big honor to get to do that."

The following month leading up to the performance he had to commit to memory two arrangements by Aretha Frank-

lin, 'Think,' and 'Respect.' He spent study hall time in the band room everyday focusing on the music.

The hardest part for Hood was not knowing anyone when he arrived. "I was freaking out a little bit as we were getting closer to the hotel." He made friends with three midwestern roommates from Missouri, Indiana and Iowa.

He was already familiar with Assistant Director Dr. Ward Miller, of MGAMB. Two years ago Miller conducted a clinic at Sherrard with band students. He is the Brass Caption Head for the Blue Stars Drum and Bugle Corps of La Crosse, WI.

Hood said during the performance he had to perform a dance routine that included a dance move called, 'the Floss.' "I still can't do it well," he laughed.

He and his parents left the Friday before Thanksgiving to have him there by Saturday, Nov. 17. Sunday was check-in with a couple hours of rehearsal that evening.

Monday was the longest rehearsal day - the group spent 8 hours practicing. Tuesday's rehearsal was



5 hours and Wednesday was 3. The band rehearsed in the National Guard Armory's soccer coliseum in Teaneck, NJ.

They kept telling us, "We are the best of the best, in that band," said Hood.

In between rehearsals a charter bus took the high schoolers sightseeing

around the city.

His favorite stop was a tour of Radio City Music Hall in Rockefeller Center and seeing the production Wicked.

On Thanksgiving morning, the group had to be on the bus, instruments in hand and in full uniform by 2 a.m. It was the coldest parade on record, coming in at 19 degrees by 11 a.m., with 15 mph winds, gusting up to 20 mph.

Despite the strenuous schedule, Hood said he would do it again. Alumni are welcome to come back, however, Hood said his parents already let him know next time he will need a job and a plane ticket to return.

