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Southern Pride marching band will celebrate 25th anniversary during 2007 football season

AUGUST 28, 2007

For the better part of a month, these representatives of Georgia Southern University have been getting ready for the 2007 football season.

Battling the heat and the gnats that are hallmarks of summer in South Georgia, they gather on the green grass of their carefully marked-off practice field.

Under the watchful eyes of their whistle-blowing leader, they work on formations and movements and cadences in an effort to become a well-tuned machine.

Finally, after surviving the rigors of two-a-day practice sessions and adjusting to the demands of being full-time students, they can see the payoff for all of the time and effort:

It's just a few more days until, with thousands of Eagle fans cheering them on, they take the field at Paulson Stadium.

The Georgia Southern football team? No, it's Southern Pride.

Numbering nearly 200 members, the University's marching band will be celebrating its 25th anniversary this fall.

In addition to performing two brand-new halftime routines during the course of the season, Southern Pride will release a special 'Greatest Hits' CD that will feature the band's most popular songs of the past quarter century.

Southern Pride will also host a pair of special events that will bring alumni of the band back to campus for performances at Eagle football games.

'We are really looking forward to celebrating 25 years of Southern Pride,' said Mathew D. Fallin, the associate director of bands in Georgia Southern's Department of Music and the director of the marching band. 'We have a fine group of students whose talent and dedication in support of the football team will continue to help make Saturdays in Paulson Stadium a memorable experience for all Eagle fans.'

Fallin has been affiliated with Southern Pride in one capacity or another for 21 of the band's 25 years. A native of nearby Claxton, he was a percussionist in the University's very first marching band, which was created by director Jerold Michaelson in 1982 to support the fledgling football program.

After graduating in 1987, Fallin left Georgia Southern to pursue his graduate degrees, but he returned in 1991 to assist Michaelson's successor, Daniel Pittman. It was Fallin and Pittman who dubbed the marching band Southern Pride.

'We just felt like the marching band needed an identity of its own,' said Fallin, who succeeded Pittman as director of the marching band in 1994. 'We came up with the name and the logo, and it sort of took off from there.'

Of course, Southern Pride is not the only moniker for the marching band. It is also billed as 'the hardest working band in show business.'

And, in preparing for its silver anniversary season, Southern Pride has displayed a work ethic that would make the late James Brown feel good. Its members began arriving on campus on the morning of Aug. 1, a full nine days before the residence halls opened for the rest of the student body.

Southern Pride held its first rehearsal of the new academic year on Aug. 3. That marked the beginning of a grueling eight-day stretch that included 21 practice sessions.

Some of the rehearsals were held at Southern Pride's practice field, which is part of the Recreation Activity Center (RAC) outdoor complex. These sessions focused on the mechanics of marching.

Other rehearsals were held inside the RAC. At these sessions, the band concentrated on learning or re-learning, as the case may be its repertoire of songs.

All together, the members of Southern Pride logged well over 40 hours of rehearsal time before the first official day of fall semester.

'It takes quite a bit of work to make it all come together,' Fallin said. 'I'm not sure most people realize just how much these students put into it.'

Classes began on Aug. 13, and that's when Southern Pride initiated the weekly practice routine it will use until the end of football season. The band rehearses from 4 p.m. until 6 p.m. every Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

The thrice-a-week practice schedule represents a significant departure for Southern Pride. In each of the last two seasons, the band had four rehearsals each week. Prior to that, it practiced five times a week.

'Like a lot of college marching bands, we have a good bit of turnover in personnel from year to year,' Fallin said. 'Between class and other activities, students have so much to keep them busy. We hope that cutting back on the number of days we practice when school is in session will encourage more students to stay in the band.'

Marching band is an academic course worth one hour of credit. The course is a requirement for music education majors, who must participate in Southern Pride for a minimum of two years in order to obtain their degrees.

During a typical season, music majors comprise about 25 percent of the band's membership. The rest are former high school musicians who simply enjoy performing in a marching band and supporting the football team.

To reward Southern Pride's most loyal members, the Department of Music is now awarding Band Service Awards, which are a kind of scholarship.

"These awards are another way of encouraging students to stay with the marching band," Fallin said.

The latest edition of Southern Pride includes 128 wind instruments, 35 percussionists, three drum majors, 10 color guard members, seven majorettes and one feature twirler.

When the Eagle football team kicks off the season against West Georgia on Sept. 8, Southern Pride will unveil the first of the two halftime shows it will perform in 2007.

To design the marching routines, Fallin uses a special computer program that tracks the movement of every member of the band in conjunction with the appropriate music. The result is a "drill book" that is distributed to each member. The book for the first halftime show is almost 25 pages long.

"With instruments on the sideline, we teach and rehearse the drill in segments," Fallin said. "The band marches to a recorded tape or sings the parts to help develop the idea of associating moves on the field with phrases in the music. After the drill becomes familiar, we put the segments together, this time with the instruments."

Described by Fallin as "jazz-rock fusion," the season-opening halftime show will feature "Open Up Wide" by Chase; "Lucretia McEvil" by Blood, Sweat and Tears; and "Free" and "25 or 6 to 4" by Chicago.

Later in the season, Southern Pride will perform a halftime show based on the music of Earth, Wind and Fire. That routine will include "In the Stone," "Got to Get You into My Life," "Let's Groove," "Getaway" and "Fantasy."

As usual, Southern Pride will continue to add to the pageantry and excitement of the Eagles' home contests with a pre-game show that includes the University fight song and alma mater.

Both of those tunes will appear on Southern Pride's "Greatest Hits" CD. Featuring more than 40 songs, the CD will be available for purchase in late September.

'The CD is a collection of the most popular songs we've played on the field and in the stands over the past 25 years,'" Fallin said. 'We think it's something that every Georgia Southern football fan will want to have.'

To further celebrate its history, Southern Pride will welcome former members back to Paulson Stadium for two special occasions during the upcoming season.

On Sept. 22, alumni who are now band directors at the high school level can bring their bands and perform on the field with Southern Pride at halftime.

On Oct. 6, alumni will have the opportunity to dust off their instruments and perform on the field and in the stands with Southern Pride.

'We're really looking forward to seeing some of our former members,'" Fallin said. 'They are the ones who helped make the marching band what it is today.'

For more information on Southern Pride or to buy the 'Greatest Hits' CD, visit <http://class.georgiasouthern.edu/music/PerformanceOpportunities/Bands/spride.php> or call (912) 681-5396.

Kenney, Bath named AED Scholars

AUGUST 28, 2007

Two faculty members in Georgia Southern University's College of Education have been honored by the Institute for Educational Inquiry (IEI) for their continuing contributions to educational renewal through the Agenda for Education in a Democracy. Associate Dean Stephanie Kenney and Goizueta Endowed Professor Dianne Bath were among 30 university and school district educators across the nation to be designated AED Scholars.

'Stephanie Kenney and Dianne Bath are both strongly committed to ongoing educational renewal,'" said Cindi Chance, dean of the College of Education. 'Their success with Georgia Southern's partner schools demonstrates their effectiveness in preparing new teachers and strengthening the work of teachers already in the classroom.'

Kenney's recognition comes as a result of her ongoing leadership in strengthening partner schools and the teacher education curriculum, and specifically strengthening relationships among educators in the arts and sciences, professional education, and P-12 schools. She also provides leadership to

improve education through community engagement. Kenney has been at Georgia Southern since 1995.

Bath's recognition comes as a result of her ongoing scholarly leadership in strengthening the P-12 school curriculum and instruction, with particular attention to supporting new teachers. Prior to coming to Georgia Southern, Bath served as assistant superintendent for the advancement of teaching and learning in Bulloch County, Ga.

Kenney and Bath are among thousands of educators associated with the IEI's National Network for Educational Renewal, a growing network of school and college/university partnerships across the United States that strives to implement the four-part mission of the Agenda for Education in a Democracy:

- Foster in young students the skills and knowledge necessary for effective participation in a democracy;
- Ensure access to those skills and knowledge regardless of race, gender, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, or birth language;
- Develop and provide continuing support to educators who nurture the well-being of students;
- Ensure that educators are competent and committed to serving as stewards of their schools.

For more information about Georgia Southern's educator preparation programs, visit the College of Education Web site at <http://coe.georgiasouthern.edu/>