On a rare Saturday when they weren’t marching onto the field at a Georgia Southern football game, members of Southern Pride, the University marching band, were serving food to those in need in Statesboro.

Twenty-five students from Southern Pride volunteered at the Soup Kitchen at Statesboro First United Methodist Church, where they served some 150 people meals and entertained them with a few rousing music numbers as they dined.

The effort was just one part of “Southern Pride Stepping Out,” a community outreach initiative started by Colin McKenzie, D.M.A., assistant professor of Music and director of Athletic Bands, who wanted to give the students a chance to engage their community while attending Georgia Southern.

"The idea really was to get our students more engaged in the local community, and out in the community," he said. "Our school community sees them a lot. If the local community goes to a football game, they'll see them from a distance, but this is an opportunity for them to engage with the local community, and for them to have an opportunity to serve the local community in a way that is different, and in a way that I hope impacts them in a positive way — and maybe an eye-opening way.”

Sara Melford, director of the Soup Kitchen, says the effort is certainly worthwhile. A chemistry professor at DePaul University for 35 years before moving to Statesboro, Melford and other volunteers coordinate both helpers and food for each weekly Soup Kitchen, and appreciate all the help they can get. And while the service provides meals for those who need them, the helpers get just as much out of the transaction.

"You get a good feeling because you know you’re doing good, and you see how much these people enjoy coming," she said. “This is their chance to have their special meal of the week.”

Southern Pride members serve food

Southern Pride members helped prepare food, hauled dinner plates to the Statesboro Summit Apartments for the elderly, and then served dinner to attendants. Rachel Jones, a sophomore accounting major and saxophone player with Southern Pride, said the experience was a fulfilling one.
“I’m really glad I got to do this today,” she said. “I enjoy working with people and serving people, and this was a great chance to do that.”

Karen Phipps, a middle-school teacher and volunteer at the Soup Kitchen for the last six years, says the help is appreciated.

“I was so excited to see that [Southern Pride] truck,” she said. “I love to see others getting involved.”

Phipps has volunteered every weekend for the last six years, missing only a few weeks after suffering debilitating health problems and the loss of her husband shortly after her recovery. She dedicates herself to the work now not only because she doesn’t sit still for very long — lightly bouncing against the counter as she says this — but also because she likes to give back.

“So many of these people don’t feel like real people because they’re coming here for a meal they don’t normally get,” she said. “They’re no better or worse than me. Life just dealt me a better hand than them this year. Next year, I could be in line. You never know. They so totally appreciate being treated as normal.”

McKenzie says Southern Pride will continue to look for service projects in the area, and will be serving with Habitat for Humanity in the Spring.
The Theatre & Performance program at Georgia Southern University continues the 2015-16 season with Bernie Sahlins’ and Nick Rudall’s “The Mysteries: Creation.” Directed by Lisa Abbott, “The Mysteries: Creation” is a modern adaptation of the medieval mystery plays that were used to share Bible stories in the days when literacy was often limited to the churches and church leaders. This production explores the biblical tales of the Creation, Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Noah and the Ark, Abraham and Isaac and ends with the Nativity. The show is an interactive experience with audience members invited onto the stage to join in song and dance and the celebration of these stories.

During the Middle Ages various guilds of workers were each responsible for the different stories presented during church festivals. GSU’s production reflects that history with the actors playing a company of modern-day blue-collar workers coming together to perform the play. The set, props and costumes are a creative conglomeration of found materials that reflect the simple faith of the performers. A live rock band on stage adds to the energy and excitement of the performance.

Featured actors in this production include Akil Jackson as God, Whitaker Gardner as Lucifer, Tyra Wilson as Gabriel, and Kathryn Burrell as Mary.

“The Mysteries: Creation” opens Wednesday, Nov. 11, and runs through Wednesday, Nov. 18. All shows begin at 7:30 p.m. with a matinee performance on Sunday, Nov. 15 at 2 p.m. An additional evening performance has been added on Sunday, Nov. 15th at 7:30pm. The play is family friendly and a great theatre experience for young children. There will be no show on Monday, Nov. 16.

Student and youth tickets are $6. Faculty, staff and community tickets are $12. All seating is general admission. Group prices are available, contact the box office for information. The house opens at 7 p.m., and we encourage audience members to arrive no later than 7:15 p.m. to ensure good seats. The balcony will serve as overflow seating. Call the Box Office at 912-478-5379 to make reservations. Reservation requests can be left on box office voicemail 24-hours a day. The box office is open 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. Monday- Friday for ticket purchases and reopens at 6 p.m. on performance days.