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[Home](#) > [Press Releases](#) > Southern Pride To-Go to Inject School Spirit into Statesboro on Friday Nights

Southern Pride To-Go to Inject School Spirit into Statesboro on Friday Nights

AUGUST 30, 2012

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If you were in a Statesboro restaurant or hangout on a Friday before a home football game last year, you may have been startled by a clandestine group of Southern Pride Marching Band members who have dubbed themselves, 'Southern Pride To-Go.' Each Friday before a Georgia Southern home football game, a small group of musicians raids restaurants and hangouts throughout Statesboro playing the fight songs and other popular tunes to get fans fired up for Saturday's game.

"This is quickly becoming a popular Georgia Southern tradition," says Colin McKenzie, director of the Southern Pride Marching Band. "It started with a simple idea – nine to 10 marching band members and a van. People loved it last year and we're excited about this year."

The idea began when McKenzie and University Marketing & Communications Director, Christian Flathman sat down and talked about ways to get fans, alumni and the City of Statesboro excited about upcoming home football games. "When we first started calling local restaurants and hangouts, there was a lot of silence on the other end of the phone when we told them about the idea," says Flathman. "After the first week, people started asking if we would come back the next Friday and then it took on a life of its own."

How it Works

Each home football game week the band selects where it will be going on Friday night. Volunteer musicians from the University's Southern Pride Marching Band sign up to be considered and are selected for the group. They meet on campus and after a quick warm up, pile into a multi-passenger

van and then head to their first location. When they arrive at a location – which is only known to the band and business owner – the band piles out of the vehicle as fast as they can and immediately goes into the restaurant to begin playing.

“When you see nine marching band members run in with drums, tubas, trombones, trumpets and more it kind of catches you by surprise,” says Flathman. “Last year, we had a couple of people jump out of their chairs when they started playing the fight song in the middle of the restaurant.”

The band will play three to four quick tunes and then immediately run out, jump back in the vehicle and head to their next location. They repeat the fun until they have completed their route for the evening.

“Local business owners love it because they have students, alumni and fans coming to their business and asking if the band is coming by tonight. Even better, we had opposing teams’ fans saying ‘this is awesome,’” says Flathman. “We want everyone to get excited about the University. If they show up when you’re out to dinner or having a good time, we hope you’ll join in with them.”

“This was one of those ideas that was different and no one really expected it and I think that’s what makes it great,” says McKenzie, who has to narrow down a huge list of volunteers each week. “We have an incredibly dedicated group of musicians who love to perform and the Friday Night Band is a great way to showcase the group. The smiles and cheers we get when we come running in are worth it. We’ve already been asked if we’re doing it again this year and my answer is, yes...but we’re not telling you when or where we’re going to show up.”

Businesses interested in learning more about ‘Southern Pride To-Go’ or supporting the band can contact Colin McKenzie at 912-478-5396 or via e-mail at: cmckenzie@georgiasouthern.edu.

Georgia Southern University, a Carnegie Doctoral/Research University founded in 1906, offers more than 120 degree programs serving more than 20,000 students. Through eight colleges, the University offers bachelor’s, master’s and doctoral degree programs built on more than a century of academic achievement. In 2012, the University was named one of the Top 10 most popular universities in the country by *U.S. News & World Report* and is a top choice of Georgia’s HOPE scholars. Georgia Southern is recognized for its student-centered approach to education. Visit: www.georgiasouthern.edu.

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