

MARCHING IN STYLE

LG High School band dons new uniforms

By Trish Yerges

La Grande High School Band Director Chris Leavitt announced that this school year, his marching band is performing in their new custom-made DeMoulin band uniforms.

“We have been trying to get new uniforms since about 2012, and we didn’t have a lot happening in that direction,” said Leavitt. “However, two years ago, the parents of two freshman band members wanted to form a committee and get that process going. Those two parents were Tressa Seydel and Heather Null.”

Leavitt met with Seydel and Null, and they started a committee. They met and decided the type of uniform they wanted, whether that was traditional or modern, what kind of fabric they wanted, the design and the longevity of the uniform.

“We put it out to bid to three different companies, asking for their designs after telling them what we were looking for,” he said. “We had it narrowed down to two different designs, two different companies, and it came down to materials and appearance. We chose DeMoulin.”

DeMoulin Brothers and Company is located in Greenville, Illinois. Founded in 1892, the business today focuses on sewn



uniforms for music performance groups like marching bands. LHS had purchased uniforms from DeMoulin before, about 20 years ago for \$30,000, but those uniforms were now falling apart, and the band was long overdue for new ones.

“We seem to have a tradition that every 20 years we replace uniforms rated to last 10 years,” he said. “Somehow in La Grande we make them last twice as long. We take very good care of them.”

Consequently, Leavitt and the committee were eager to meet with the representative of DeMoulin, who flew out and drove to La Grande, bringing with him

a mock uniform to show the committee. The rep walked them through various processes involved in choosing the right uniform to meet the band’s needs.

“He was awesome,” said Leavitt. “His customer service, the personal touch really helped us solidify going with that company.”

The band parents started an aggressive fund raising campaign and created a 26-page proposal and presented it to Superintendent George Mendoza during his first year, and to the Tigers Boosters and Soroptimists, who wanted to support the band.

Leavitt was deeply appreciative for the help of

Seydel, Null and the committee, along with the help of the band boosters and the community at large, who were able to raise \$75,000 in just six months for new band uniforms.

“That’s a phenomenal feat,” he said.

The band program has both grown in size and community performances and other things, so the previous 100 uniforms they had no longer met their needs. Leavitt wanted some room to grow so he requested 125 new uniforms.

The new uniforms have the logo of the school district on the left breast pocket, and they have modern, creased pants called vents.

The vents have 20 snaps on the inside legs to allow for auto hemming, so there is no need for sewn hemming anymore. The jackets have the same feature in the sleeves. As a result, each uniform can be snapped to fit uniquely to each student’s arm and leg length.

The new uniforms are modern, sleek and still have a traditional look. All of these uniforms are hand sewn and hand designed. They are made of dry-cleanable fabrics, which the committee felt were more professional looking than the machine washable style.

“I’ve worn the old uniforms when I was in the program back in the early 2000s,” Leavitt said. “I’ve got to see these kids in their new uniforms, and they enjoy them.”

The new uniforms have capes as well as new, more modern designed shakos (hats), and the plumes are bigger and more vibrant. Each student has a brand new pair of marching shoes, a pair of odorless socks, gloves, a poncho, uniform garment bags and hat boxes.

“We got everything,” he said. “DeMoulin took care of our every need.”

DeMoulin sent out a team of designers, and they personally fitted them to each of the band members.

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