

Falcon Reports

Falcon Marching Band on the Road to China

by Kristin Bratton

There is definitely no lack of ambition in the band program at Catalina Foothills High School (CFHS). In November 2006, the CFHS Falcon Marching Band flew cross-country to play in New York City for the annual Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. This year, they're taking their show a bit farther.

On June 22, the CFHS band will depart Tucson for China to perform in the preliminary ceremonies of the 2008 Olympic Games, held in Beijing. With around 120 students, 13 parent chaperones, and five teachers, the trip is a massive enterprise — the greatest that the band program has ever undertaken at Foothills.

It will be the trip of a lifetime for many high-school students. "It is going to be so cool to be able to experience a culture so different from ours," says Ian Palmer, a sophomore who will be attending the trip. In addition to marching in a parade in the ancient city of Chengde and performing at a welcome banquet in front of the Chengde government and Olympic Festival Committee, the group will also get to see some of the sights of China. They will be touring Tiananmen Square, the Forbidden City, and the Great Wall and attending the Peking Opera. They will even visit a local school for some cultural exchange with Chinese students.

"I'm really excited to see all the landmarks," says sophomore AJ Tomiak. "Plus, I feel like Ms. Shane[-Boyd] is really doing a great job organizing the trip. She's really making sure everyone has enough background knowledge about the country and people and culture so that they know what to expect."

And knowing what to expect is important when journeying to a place with such a distinct culture — one that most students and adults attending the trip know very little about. To prepare, there will be a series of four cultural meetings for those traveling to China. The students are required to attend these meetings, which will include talks by guest speakers and presentations about the various places and landmarks they will be visiting. There is also the option of taking a six-week Chinese language class offered by the school district prior to the trip.

The trip is a major commitment, and the preparations seem endless. Hannah Kahler, a senior who will be going to China, agrees. "I think that it's going to be a big commitment during second semester and into the summer before the trip," she says. As a senior, Hannah looks at the trip as both an enriching cultural experience and a last chance to be with many of the friends she has made in band over the years. "It will be something that I can do with all my friends the summer before we all go to college," she says.

And as June rolls around, the dust is brushed off the suitcases, and all the final rehearsals come to a close, the organization and preparations will pay off: this will certainly be a trip none of them will forget.

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