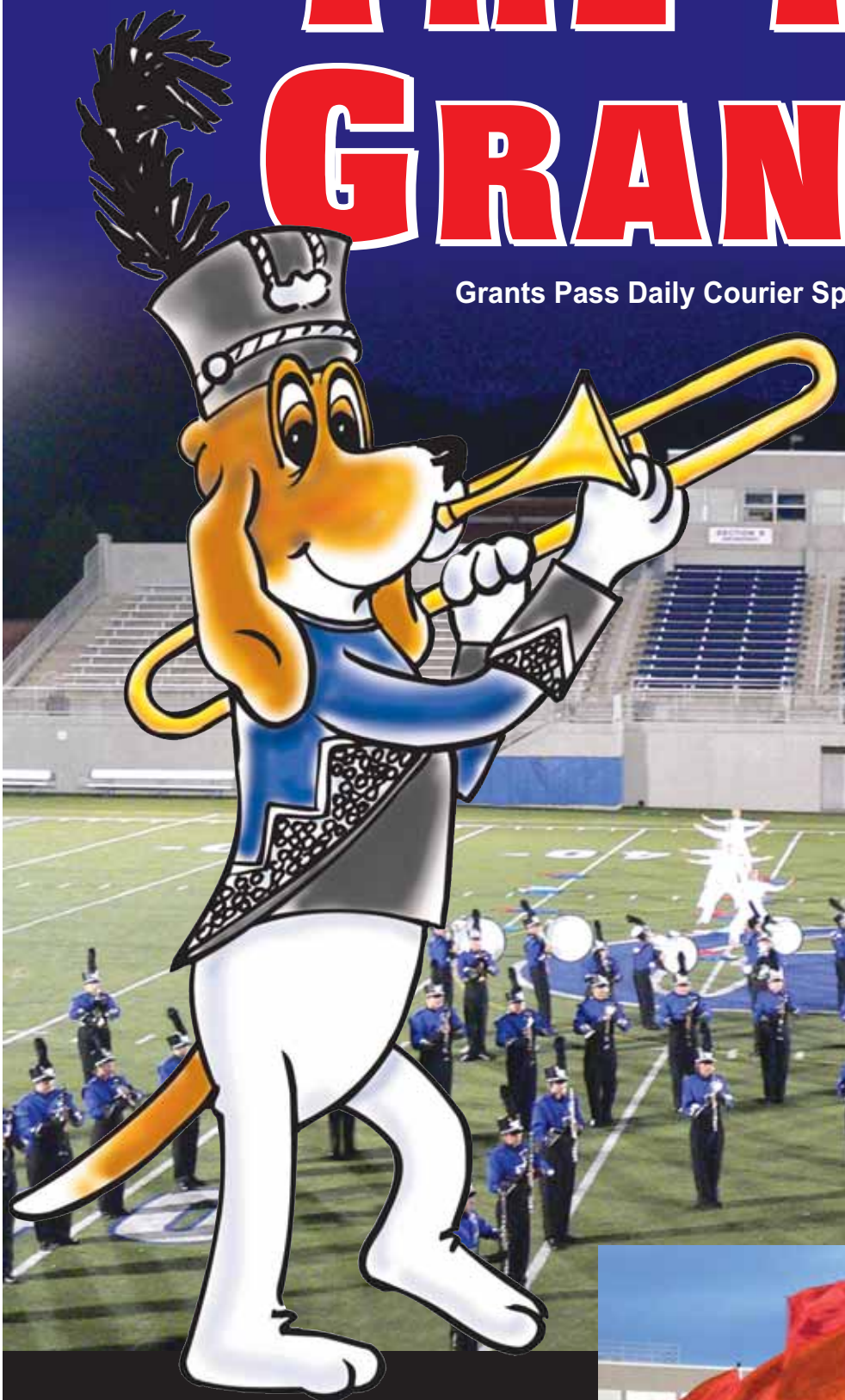


THE PRIDE OF GRANTS PASS

Grants Pass Daily Courier Special Section

April 15, 2010



Help Us March in New York!
Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade



Congratulations Grants Pass High School Marching Band & Auxiliary! The first school in Oregon to be selected to participate in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade in New York City.

GP's Jason Garcia is the leader of the band



Jason Garcia expects to take about 150 students to the 2010 Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade.

High school music teacher often spends 16-hour days working with his students

By Patti Richter
of the Daily Courier

Jason Garcia is passionate about music. He teaches music to high school and elementary students five days a week. He plays the trumpet with a local band, Funktional Fusion. And in his spare time, the 37-year-old father of two young girls can be found playing his guitar.

"I dabble with all of them," Garcia said of the instruments in the Grants Pass High School Marching Band. "I'm a jack-of-all-trades but master of none. I know a little bit of each because I have to in order to teach students."

Garcia grew up in Southern Oregon, graduating from Eagle Point High School in 1990. He continued to study music at the University of Oregon and became a member of its Green Garter Band. His first job after graduating from college was the band director post at Grants Pass High School.

This year, his focus is on preparing his band for the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade in November. He expects to take about 150 students to New York City.

"The band is usually around 110 students but big trips like this help in our efforts to recruit eighth graders as freshmen," Garcia said.

Grants Pass was selected to participate after sending in tapes of performances last summer. Band members and their parents have accumulated \$175,000 of the \$326,000 needed to get to the parade.

"We're getting there," said Leslie O'Brien, parent of a band student and fundraising chairwoman.

While the band is always fundraising, Gar-

He gives them tough love when they need it but they respect it.

Bill Boldon

North Middle School music teacher on Jason Garcia

Garcia said this year's efforts are off the charts. "Thank God for our band boosters," he said. "There is no way we could even dream of operating without them. They have the kids playing everywhere to raise money. Since we started this, there hasn't been a week where we haven't had a fundraiser."

North Middle School music teacher Bill Boldon is one of Garcia's assistants but the two have known each other for almost 20 years. The two attended University of Oregon together and became friends while members of the university's marching band.

"It's always better when you get to work with someone who is a great, close friend but also a great teacher," Boldon said. "I consider myself lucky that way."

The two are also on the same page when it comes to teaching and the future of the band. Students are often intimidated by Garcia's program and the number of hours students are expected to commit to band.

"He gives them tough love when they need it but they respect it," Boldon said. "The students get it. He is trying to make them better. I'm looking forward to sending my own children to him one day. I have absolute faith in what he does and is doing with the program."

"The reputation of the program is one of a

family atmosphere," he added. "And this family has a great dad."

Garcia is the band director with the second longest tenure at Grants Pass. Ray McAlister taught and ran the band from the late 1940s to 1972.

He spends 16-hour days working on band during the marching band's season from August through November, seeing his wife, Dawnelle, and two daughters, 9-year-old Alexis and 6-year-old Makayla, sporadically. So when he gets free time of any sort, he's with his family.

"When I'm home, I'm home," Garcia said. "I don't watch television. I'm not on the computer and I'm not answering my cell phone. I'm with my girls."

Garcia has watched the program and his philosophy change. Instead of focusing on how large the band could be, Garcia makes sure the band members are good musicians.

"They are good students, some of the best in the high school," he added. "They commit to me for four years. That is huge for a teenager."

Garcia makes sure the band is more well-rounded, not just know for one particular section such as percussion or its horns. He has worked to improve not only the marching band, but the concert band and jazz band, too.

"It's hard for them to do as freshmen," Garcia said. "It's hard to be in band and stick with it for four years. But my students tell me it is their favorite part of the year. When marching band season is over, they can't wait for next year to get here."

"This is not an easy gig," he continued. "It's a small town and a small program but it has a big heart and big expectations. It's challenging to try to live up to those."