

Pullman Community Band pulls together

By Vera White, Daily News staff writer | Posted: Thursday, October 14, 1999 12:00 am

The unlikely partnership between the Pullman Concert Band (PCB) and the Pullman Chamber of Commerce has both sides excited about the possibilities.

"The mission of the band is to perform for local communities in keeping with the true spirit of the 'community band,' " said PCB Conductor Heidi Jarvis. "The relationship with the chamber will be a great way to support their mission in serving and supporting the Pullman area.

Fritz Hughes, executive director of the Pullman Chamber since Aug. 1, agrees.

"I was very much a music person through my high school and college days," said Hughes, who retired from the Pullman School District as principal of Sunnyside Elementary School.

During his years at Clarkston High School and Washington State University, Hughes played in the band.

"After school, I put the old trumpet away," said Hughes.

But he recently dug out the instrument and took it to Keeney Brothers Music Center in Moscow to get it cleaned up.

"My goal is to get proficient enough to join the PCB and be ready to play by the time they have their Christmas program," Hughes said. "My problem is, when I play for about a half hour, my lips 'ice' up."

Superior Court Judge Wally Friel, a founding member of the PCB, was the person who set the chamber sponsorship in motion.

"He (Friel) approached me last month at a chamber function where he was playing with the Snake River Six (a popular Dixieland group)," Hughes recalled. "He asked me if the chamber would like to be a sponsor and I jumped at his invitation. I believe the chamber should support any community endeavor. It's important when that happens."

Jarvis, who is in her eighth season with the band, agrees.

"Wally is a good businessman as well as a musician," Jarvis said. "Both groups will definitely benefit from the sponsorship."

Friel, who blows a hot trombone, is a current board member and past president of the PCB.

"I think Wally is one of our most enthusiastic members and one of the reasons the band has continued so long," said Jarvis, executive director of the Washington Idaho Symphony and a former high school band and choir director at Garfield-Palouse High School for six years.

The PCB was founded in 1975 by Dana Cleveland, long-time band director at Pullman High School (PHS). The school auditorium was named in his honor a few years ago.

Cleveland is retired and lives in Moscow.

"The band has performed some formal concerts on that stage and if I see Dana in the audience, I always ask him to come up and conduct a number," Jarvis said.

The band currently numbers 45 members, ranging in age from 13 to 75, and hailing from towns throughout the Palouse. Washington State University and University of Idaho students often join the band during summer months; and the ensemble also has a few members of the Washington Idaho Symphony.

With all this talent, the PCB is able to perform a wide range of repertoire including the Shostakovich Folk Dances, a Percy Grainger Suite, the Holst 2nd Suite in F, and many more traditional favorites.

"The band has always kept the Sousa and Fillmore marches alive on the Palouse, as well as movie themes, standards and Broadway medleys," Jarvis boasted.

The band is available to play year around, but the majority of their performances take place in the spring and summer months. This year, the group has performed 11 concerts including the Northwest Community Band Festival in Lewiston in June; an April concert in Albion; the annual Pullman 4th of July celebration; Pullman's Reaney Park Concert Series; and Moscow's Farmers Market.

The band rehearses from 7:30 to 9 p.m. every Tuesday at the PHS band room. Auditions aren't necessary to join.

"People who are interested can contact me, or show up on Tuesdays with instrument in hand," Jarvis said.

"We can set them up with the music we are playing. The only thing we ask is that members be of high school age, or older."

Jarvis can be reached at (509) 334-9252.

"I feel very fortunate to serve as conductor of a group this caliber," Jarvis said.

The PCB is a self-supporting, which Jarvis believes is a real compliment to the seven-member board and the band members themselves.

"Our sponsorship will be more in name and probably not financial," Hughes said. "I think both the city of Pullman and the chamber should support the community band. I believe the chamber needs to be visible in supporting all endeavors of the community whether business and economic, arts events, or any activity relating to the city. The band is a good example. It's out there and we need to support it."

Jarvis sees the chamber as a great booking agent.

"We've discussed a couple of possibilities such as the Junior Miss program," she said. "The joint partnership will help to make us more visible in the community."

The next scheduled concert for the PCB is the popular holiday concert at Moscow's Palouse Mall, set for Dec. 18 at 11 a.m.