

“Gwynn Park High School Instrumental Music Program Prepares Students for College and Careers.”

This year in response to Dr. William D. Hite’s (Superintendent for Prince George’s County Public Schools) push for increased focus on Prince George’s County Public School’s College and Career Readiness initiative, Gwynn Park High School’s Instrumental Music Program under the direction of Mr. William L. Lake, Jr. has increased experiences for students to perform and experience life on the collegiate level in the performing arts field. Mr. Lake believes that it is imperative for students to experience college and professional career experiences in order to be successful and confident in the field of the performing arts. To this end, on October 1st, 2011, the Gwynn Park High School Marching Band and Poms Dance Team participated in University of Maryland College Park’s Massed Bands Day. Students who attended were one of over seven hundred instrumentalists, color guard and dance team performers for this event marching next to current collegiate marchers from the University of Maryland College Park, Towson University and several other regional high school participants. Student arrived at the University four hours before “kick-off” and learned their drill-spots the formed patriotic symbols including an outline of the continental United States of America to the tunes of American Patriotic themes and the United States National March “Stars and Stripes Forever” composed by John Phillip Sousa. After practice, students donned their marching band uniforms and watched the Mighty Sound of Maryland’s pre-show under the direction of Dr. L. Richmond Sparks, Director of Bands. Students were wowed with the pageantry and musicianship of the two-hundred and seventy-five member ensemble that was once directed on the field by their band director Mr. William L. Lake, Jr. as Drum Major from Fall 2003-Fall 2006. Dr. L. Richmond Sparks, Director of Bands and Mr. Elijah Osterloh commented that they were ecstatic to have the Gwynn Park High School Marching Band participating.

If this was not enough, the Gwynn Park High School marching band has been invited to perform as featured half time entertainment at Howard University when the Howard Bison play the Georgetown Hoyas on October 15th, 2011. The Gwynn Park Marching Yellow Jackets will be performing a half time show that celebrates the commemoration of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. monument and the tenth anniversary of 9/11. Songs featured in the show include, Bill Wither’s “Lovely Day” with narration of Dr. King’s “I Have a Dream” speech, “Can You Feel a Brand New Day” from “The Wiz”, and Alicia Key’s “Empire State of Mind”. The students will have the opportunity to experience the pride and pageantry of the Howard University’s “Showtime” Marching Band under the direction of Mr. Kelvin Washington, Assistant Director of Bands and Mr. John Newson, Director of Bands.

To culminate these exciting collegiate and professional experiences, the Gwynn Park High School Concert Band will be performing the first half of the University of Maryland’s Wind Ensemble October Concert on October 27th, 2011 held at the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center at 8:00PM. Admission is free to the public. The Gwynn Park High School Concert Band will be performing wind band selections including Michael Sweeney’s “Earthdance” and an Armed Forces Salute including marches and songs from all of the United States Military.

The concert will conclude with the Gwynn Park High School Concert Band and University of Maryland Wind Ensemble performing Erich Whitacre's "October" to be conducted by Dr. L. Richmond Sparks and the "Rough Rider's March" by famous march composer Karl L. King directed by Mr. William L. Lake, Jr.. This experience will mark the first time that the Gwynn Park High School Concert band has performed on a University Campus for a collegiate audience. Dr. Sparks has frequented Gwynn Park High School as a guest clinician for the Concert Band in the past before the band's performances as the District and State Wind Band Instrumental Music Festival.

When walking in to Mr. Lake's Band Room there is contemporary bulletin board with a cartoon banner stating "Oh the Places You'll Go" by Dr. Seuss. Above, there are college pennants that are hanging from schools across the country: Hampton University, Virginia State University, Tennessee State University, Morgan State University, Delaware State University, Coppin University, Tuskegee State University and the University of Maryland College Park. Each of these schools currently has students who are marching in marching bands at these institutions or have declared a music major on their campus that are alumni of the Gwynn Park High School Instrumental Music Program. "I just want students see the places that I've been blessed to go and understand that they too can be successful in any field of human endeavor – if they 'Strive for the Highest!'" Mr. Lake exclaims.