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## HHS Marching Band Wins National Championship

Two semi-truck drivers, five staff members, 22 chaperones and 187 students loaded up on busses at Hendrickson High School on December 27 for 40 hours of travel to and from Glendale, Arizona. In the end, the long journey paid off for the Hendrickson Hawk Band and director Garth Gundersen.

The Hawks spent six days in Arizona, which was just long enough to see the sights and blow away the field in two different competitions at the Fiesta Bowl Marching Championships.

The Hawk Band earned the Grand Champion trophy in the Fort McDowell Fiesta Bowl Parade—the only major bowl parade where bands are judged—with top rankings in the music and general effect categories. The second-place team finished well off the pace.

The marching competition was held at University of Phoenix Stadium, home to the National Football League's Arizona Cardinals.

"When they played the first note in there I could just tell it was going to be a special performance. The acoustics in there were just beautiful, and it was really well suited for the type of show we had written," Gundersen said. "It was really a special performance by the kids."



The Hawk Band was named Grand Master Champion with a stunning performance of their show "Illuminatus." They placed first in four of the six judged areas, including music performance, general effect, visual performance and percussion.

"You usually win a marching band competition by a couple hundredths of a

point," said Gundersen who is in his eighth year as the director of the Hawk Band. "We won the marching portion by almost four points."

The Fiesta Bowl is one of the oldest and most well-regarded high school marching competitions in the United States. Having already marched in the ABC Boscov's Thanksgiving Day Parade in Philadelphia and in the Disney Magic Music Days Parade, the logical next step for the program on its way to the top was marching in the Fiesta Bowl.

"I've had some sort of direction for what I want us to achieve. We want to get to the Rose Bowl," Gundersen said. "Because of our parade resume and our success in the UIL state competition we put together a resume and applied to be invited to the Fiesta Bowl. That's kind of the next tier up."

The band was presented with two choices: Go to Washington D.C. to march in the Cherry Blossom Parade or go to Arizona to compete in the Fiesta Bowl. The vote for Arizona was "fairly unanimous," Gundersen said.

The competition began with morning preliminaries, and eight bands advanced from the preliminaries to the evening finals where bands compete for the Grand Master's Trophy.



"Band is a roller coaster and it has its highs and lows. This is as big of a high as I've had since we've been at Hendrickson," Gundersen said. "To see them perform was truly magical. It's pretty special."

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