

Stepping in style



The Sanford High School Marching Band debuted its new uniforms at the Memorial Day parade on Monday, May 30.

HA Mapes helps fund new uniforms through Legacy Foundation

When the Sanford High School Marching Band stepped out Monday, they literally put their best foot forward.

Their new uniforms arrived just in time for the city's annual Memorial Day parade, and some 35 student musicians felt proud to step off in style.

"The new uniforms are great! They are very breathable and nice fitting," said SHS senior Mason Nguyen.

Not only do the uniforms look modern and fit the aesthetic of the new high school, they are breathable, comfortable and lightweight, said Marching Band Director Hailey Francoeur. "The marching arts have evolved quite a bit in the past decade, with growing demand for flexible uniforms that can move with the performer. The tight, heavy, and dated old uniforms made it difficult for students to move, and didn't allow as much freedom as these new ones do. I think these new uniforms give the students a new found sense of pride in Sanford that aligns with the current building they're in as well."

The uniforms date back to about 2008, and while they served the band well through countless shows and parades (as well as President Barack Obama's inauguration in 2009), their time had come.

The new uniforms, with the cost split by the regular school budget and the nonprofit Sanford Schools Legacy Foundation, come from G2 Performance, and are designed for the marching athlete, "which is exactly what our students are," noted Francoeur.

"It's great to see new uniforms at Sanford High School and see good changes that Ms. Francoeur is doing!" said Nguyen, who



New vests that go over the shirts and a hat accessory will complete the ensemble when they arrive later this week.

plays the alto saxophone.

The students wear these uniforms for a wide variety of events. "During the fall marching band season, there are about six shows that we attend, along with home football games here at Sanford, and the pep rally held at school," said Francoeur. "The concert band will wear these uniforms for the Holly Daze Parade and Memorial Day parade in town, and we may even use the tops of the uniforms for pep band since they're so comfortable."

The marching band will double in numbers next year, says Francoeur, who is just finishing her first year at Sanford High School, noting she had 23 marching last fall and 48 have registered for band next year. The concert band, which will also wear the uniforms, though less often, has 33 students — with 59 students signed up for concert band for the 2023 school year.

"We have seen tremendous growth over the school year, so it's really exciting to think of

what the band may look like in a few years," said Francoeur.

The Legacy Foundation is a nonprofit funding source that aims to privately fund the extras, and at times the gap between real costs and the taxpayer-funded budget.

In this case, Jon Mapes and his family business H.A. Mapes donated to the Legacy Foundation to fund the new uniforms.

"Our band members and families put many hours into practice and travel. We should look and sound as good as the other regional bands, if not better," said Jon Mapes, who grew up in a sports-dominated family in Sanford. "It took me many years to better understand that the Arts are critically important to a community and, more importantly, to individuals. It has been said the local band is the spirit of a community ... yet historically underfunded."

The generous donation means so much to him personally too, having been born and raised in Sanford and Springvale with his sisters, as was his wife's family. "Our business has benefited from this community since 1936 and it has always been important for us to 'give back.' It is equally important for students to have a positive experience in our schools as well as live in a safe and supportive community. We all have to do what we can to make our community a place where students have fond memories."

As for the band students, their future looks bright.

"In terms of the program, I think the new uniforms help shine a light on the hard work and determination that these students exhibit," said Francoeur. "We're entering an exciting period of growth in our band department, and these uniforms illuminate that, and they pay testament to the decades of excellence this program has shown."