

SOUTHINGTON BAND BACKERS, INC.
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**SOUTHINGTON BAND STUDENTS VISIT WASHINGTON D.C.;
PERFORM ONCE-IN-A-LIFETIME CONCERT AT MOUNT VERNON**

For Immediate Release

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WASHINGTON, D.C. --- Southington High School Marching and Concert Band students took our nation's capitol by storm May 12-15 for two unique performances, and an amazing educational experience of a lifetime.

According to Jeff Shaw, SHS Music Director, "It has been a long time since the SHS Band has been able to take a trip! The world situation has greatly changed since we went to the Gator Bowl in 2000. This trip was planned to provide and opportunity to showcase their talent while learning about our nation's capitol."

The trip for ninety students and ten chaperones was planned and coordinated by Ed Dresel, Tour Director, Destinations Unlimited, Inc. of Southington, Mr. Shaw, and Ms. Sara Sabatino, Assistant Music Director.

On Thursday, May 12, at 6:15 AM, two motor coaches arrived at Southington High School to whisk students away to Washington D.C. Students spent the afternoon at the Smithsonian National Air & Space Museum before arriving at their hotel, The Hilton Crystal City, in Arlington, VA. Students then traveled to Gangplank Marina on the Potomac River for a dinner and dancing cruise aboard the Odyssey.

The Odyssey is the only vessel designed specifically to travel beneath the historic bridges spanning the Potomac, offering exclusive river views of the nation's greatest

monuments from every table. It was a great way for students (and chaperones!) to unwind while enjoying the sights.

Friday, May 13, was a mix of “business and pleasure”. After breakfast at the hotel, students traveled to the Jefferson Memorial for their first performance of the day. The weather cooperated for this public performance while the students, seated before the steps of this historic monument, played a variety of numbers including “Hymn to the Fallen” (from the movie “Saving Private Ryan”), by John Williams, “Heroica”, by Gary P. Gilroy, “Gandalf, The Wizard” (from *The Lord of the Rings*) by John de Meij, and “Semper Fidelis”, by John Philip Sousa. And, as if it were choreographed, military aircraft flew low over the Potomac while the students played the “Star Spangled Banner”.

Following their performance at the Jefferson Memorial, the students toured the magnificent World War II Memorial with breathtaking views of the Lincoln Memorial to the West and the Washington Monument to the East. Students then walked along the reflecting pool to the Vietnam Veteran’s Memorial. Both memorials were an awe-inspiring tribute to those who fought and died for our country.

Students then visited the Capitol Area, including a stop at Ford’s Theater, learning about the history behind this important historical structure. After a quick lunch at Union Station, everyone boarded buses for their performance at Mount Vernon.

The students’ concert at George Washington’s home was organized as a “Thank You” to volunteers from “Tourism Cares for Tomorrow”, a non-profit organization formed from the consolidation of the Travelers Conservation Foundation and the National Tourism Foundation. Over 350 *Tourism Cares* volunteers were at Mount Vernon to help clean up nearly 300 acres of forest surrounding Washington's home that were damaged by Hurricane Isabel in 2003. The work was aimed at significantly diminishing the risk of forest fires, providing enhanced shelter for animals, improving the appearance of the Potomac River shoreline and creating the opportunity for the forest to regenerate.

According to Mr. Dresel, performances such as this are simply not allowed at Mount Vernon, but through his affiliation with *Tourism Cares*, he was able to arrange

this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for the students. The students performed on the *Bowling Green*, the wide expanse which is at the foreground of the Mansion.

After leaving Mount Vernon, the students had time to stop for a photo-op in front of the White House before dinner at the hotel. In the evening, the students took a Guided Illumination Tour of city, which included stops at the FDR Memorial, the Lincoln Memorial, the Korean War Memorial, and the Iwo Jima Memorial. Seeing these very special monuments at night was very impressive!

On Saturday, May 14, students visited Arlington National Cemetery, our nation's most sacred shrine, where they viewed John F. Kennedy's Gravesite, memorials to the Challenger and Columbia astronauts and the U.S.S. Maine, along with the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, where they witnessed the changing of the guard.

The students then traveled to The National Mall where they visited three Smithsonian intuitions: the National Museum of the American Indian, The National Museum of Natural History, and The National Museum of American History.

After dinner "Zanzibar on the Waterfront", one of Washington D.C.'s "hot spots", students headed over to the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts where they viewed a hilarious performance of "Sheer Madness".

On Sunday, May 15, the last day of their excursion, the students visited the Stephen F. Udvar-Hazy Center, which is the new Smithsonian Institution Air and Space Museum near Dulles Airport. The museum includes the Enterprise (the first Space Shuttle), the SR-71 Blackbird (the worlds fastest aircraft ever built), the Enola Gay (the aircraft that dropped the first atomic bomb), the Air France Concorde (the only commercial supersonic transport ever flown), along with numerous other aircraft and exhibits.

Lunch and sight seeing at Baltimore's Inner Harbor capped this exhausting, but rewarding, tour of our nation's capitol.

The Southington Band Backers wish to express our thanks to the Southington community for supporting the many fundraisers which were sponsored throughout the

year that allowed our Marching and Concert Band students to participate in this wonderful experience!

For more information, contact Jeff Shaw, SHS Music Director, at (860) 628-3229 x250. To see a photo album from the trip, visit the SHS band website at www.shsbands.com.

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