

# Lodi High band celebrates its 90th year

Lodi High Band is celebrating 90 years of marching and elevating school spirit.

The band played for the opening of the Golden Gate bridge and may be the longest-running school band in the state, said director Dave Vickerman. The program has not broken up after all these years and is even older than the Stockton Symphony, which has been around for more than 70 years.

"It has a long history of being important to the community," Vickerman said, adding that it has always served the same purpose: being the spirit arm of the school.

The biggest difference between now and earlier years is a difference in focus: The band program is not just there because many schools have one; it's there because people want it and realize the importance of music in schools, he said.

The band supports and represents the community wherever it goes.

"I'm honored to be director at this time," he said, adding that the band is pursuing a new vision to become the program that other schools look to as a guide, which could happen with hard work.

He said that all accolades the band receives are due to the directors before him, that the program has been lucky to have great directors, and the fact that it is still around shows that the directors cared about it.

"It's constantly growing; the quality of work is always improving," said Vickerman, who has been director since 2003.

Lodi High also has a jazz band, which has received numerous awards, and a color guard that accompanies the band.

The following are facts about the band's history, which can be found on the Lodi High band Web site, <http://www.lodihighbands.com>.

- The first orchestra in 1914 at Lodi High had seven members. The number of members has grown to about 100.
- Sidney Halsey became director in 1928 and was there for 34 years; during his tenure, the band received second place in 1937 at the Golden Gate Bridge Fiesta Parade for the opening of the Golden Gate Bridge.
- Band director Donald Sutherland began directing in 1948 and retired in 1983; a scholarship is still given in his name.
- In 1972, Robert Gross became the band director and created a more contemporary marching style. The official band name "The Pride of Lodi" was made. The Grape Bowl Classic also came about. The band received its first "unanimous superior" honor from the California Music Educators Association.
- Luis Gonzales became director in 1979, and the band received several awards as well as three "unanimous superior" honors.

- Dean McNair was director in 1990; the band received another "unanimous superior." McNair directs bands at Tokay High School and the Lodi Community Band.
- Beth Sanders became director in 1991, and several students made the All-State Honor Band.
- Timothy Harris became director in 1999, and the band placed at every competition and received several "unanimous superior" honors. The band traveled to Orlando, Fla., in 2000, as it was selected to represent the West Coast in the Citrus Bowl Parade on New Years Day, 2001; band members appeared on national television.

The band will celebrate its anniversary in various ways this year, including at all concerts. The band honored supporters at an event last month. The band is also searching for the oldest living former band member.

*This story was updated at 3:15 p.m. Nov. 12, 2004, to add information about Donald Sutherland.*