

Lake Erie Fanfare Annual Report

October 1, 2008 to September 30, 2009

Overview:

This past year was another truly challenging one for the Lake Erie Fanfare as we completed the “scaling back” of our operations and persevered through the most dire economic times many can remember. Surviving all this and actually having success in such a year, we feel indeed fortunate. To follow then are some of the highlights, accomplishments and also the setbacks of our major endeavors. Also included are the final outcomes of our general organizational changes undertaken this past year.

Lake Erie Fanfare Competition:

This year marked the 26th year of hosting these Drum Corps International Competitions for our organization. Once again, we received a very good line up of groups, the weather was one of the only great days we had this past summer, and as such the show was very well received! The only negative was that once again, we had an early show with the date of June 29th.

When we started the campaign for this year’s show, we truly expected to be fighting a huge uphill battle, especially where our sponsors were concerned. We did lose a couple of our regular sponsors and advertisers as businesses felt the need to curtail spending. Pleasantly surprising to us though was that we kept the majority of them and even added 2 new sponsors.

In addition, our ongoing efforts to increase the audience size was given a major boost by the Erie Community Foundation grant to help in advertising both the Fanfare show and the German Heritage Festival. Along with our regular advertising, this additional funding helped as we increased our crowd by about 200 over previous years. *Late in the year, we received word that the one serious hurdle remaining to increasing the crowd size – the early show date – has been removed, at least for 2010, as our show dates for this year are in the “prime time” of the season on August 3rd and 4th!*

Lake Erie Regiment Winter Guard:

Once again, one of the great successes of last year was our 12 year old Winter Guard! This group continued on in their new Independent World Class and not only placed better in their scoring but they also met another goal – that of increasing the number of young adults and youth involved in the program.

The Guard carried a triple membership this past season in the OIPA (Central Ohio), TRWEA (Pittsburgh area) and WGI (National) circuits and as such competed in 11 separate shows. The members of the Guard likewise earned the reputation of being exceptionally strong on the floor of competition.

German Heritage Festival:

This event started out as a late season fund raiser for our group and has now turned into that and much more as we are now permanently partnered with the DANK organization in presenting their annual ethnic festival. While DANK had produced this event for 11 years by themselves, they needed an infusion of help to better organize and promote such an event. With our long standing association of helping in the concessions area of the Fest, they approached us and we now handle nearly every aspect of the festival excepting the actual ethnic content. It has been a true “win-win” situation for both of us!

This past year, we made several bold changes to the event: moved it back to its original site – St. Nick’s Grove; expanded the musical offerings, enlarged the vendors area and the sheer number of them; opened a café area as another new offering and with the help of the ECF grant, significantly increased the advertising of it to the public. The end results were quite good indeed.

The festival as a whole was tremendously received by the public as we had almost 1,000 more patrons than the previous year. The comments we heard were very favorable to the site and new setup and the ease of operating made it enjoyable for all. Nearly every vendor reported better sales and all have indicated they intend to return for 2010!

Lake Erie Regiment Jr. Drum & Bugle Corps:

As last year’s report was being written, we were facing the stark reality that a large part of our organization was going to have to be trimmed in order for us to survive. Our beloved drum corps had been inactive for three years, and with the loss of our bingo game (due primarily to the advent of the new casino) the decisions were made to close our office and give away much of our equipment to others.

While certainly painful, this decision allowed us to heal a bit and still fulfill our mission to the area. Also, the new structure allows us to operate out of a volunteer’s basement with much less overhead and cost. We have kept the essential items and vehicles to still operate the Winter Guard, the Fanfare and the German Festival and still have all the records and info needed should we ever come to the point of being able to re-start the drum & bugle corps as well. The items and instruments we did give away are in various group’s hands now and we hope all are being used to their fullest.

Fundraising:

The 2009 season saw a busy year of activity in one of our most important yet often overlooked areas. As an organization, we try to be as self sufficient as possible feeling that the surest way to achieve our goals is to work hard at them ourselves.

In this regard, we again ran several unique fundraisers which allow our student members and their families to get involved and help make the goals achievable. These fundraising efforts include: Our Annual Sportsman's Raffle, our Program Book for the Fanfare Competition, and the Concession Sales at the German Heritage Festival.

We are very happy to say that in addition, we secured a cooperative agreement with the new HERO Biodiesel Plant . They donated the majority of the fuel for this past year's winter guard tour! *(Because of the implications of other groups asking them for the same deal, they opted to NOT publicize their generosity rather simply choosing to help out anonymously.)* We are very hopeful that this will continue into the future as it is most appreciated and saves our budget a tremendous amount of money.

Grants:

We are proud to announce that in 2009 we received 3 grants from the Erie Community Foundation, the Falcone Fund of the Erie Community Foundation, and the Erie Arts Endowment totaling a tremendous \$8,385.00. Words cannot describe how deeply we appreciate the funds these programs provide us with and their ongoing support is truly something we hope we can count on into the future!

A huge piece of good news was received very late last year when we learned we were to receive a grant as a Regional Asset from the gaming monies. In total, we received \$16,586.30 from the first round and \$8,495.24 later in May. We were truly honored to be designated as a "Regional Asset" along with so many other fine groups in Erie! The additional funding obviously went a long way to help replace some of the money we can no longer raise due to the loss of our bingo games to the casino.

Of sad note though, this appears to be the one and only year such help will be made to any groups like ours as County Council has decided to use the gaming revenues elsewhere.

Volunteers:

Our volunteers simply make the organization exist! Whether in running the overall organization, helping with the Winter Guard or whatever else, if it were not for the huge investment of volunteer hours, we could not afford to offer a fraction of what we do. Even without the summer corps this year, our cumulative hours for the organization are still staggering – approx 4,000 hours!