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NEWS RELEASE

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San Dimas High School Royal Corps Triumph in WGASC Competitions

SAN DIMAS/LA VERNE – The San Dimas High School Royal Corps music program is celebrating a pair of gold medal victories in recent Winter Guard Association of Southern California (WGASC) competitions, with the school’s brand-new junior varsity Color Guard winning its first championship, and the Percussion Ensemble earning the top prize for the first time since 2010.

“This is a great time to be a Royal Corps member. Our Color Guard program continues to amaze me, with JV and varsity squads and strong representation of our middle school students,” San Dimas High band co-director Lance Beckford said. “This sets San Dimas up for a promising future, ensuring that students come in already knowing the foundation of success for our program.”

The revival of the Percussion Ensemble is led by San Dimas Class of 2024 graduate Hunter Peterson, who brings a youthful approach to the ensemble that remains steeped in Royal Corps tradition. Peterson currently attends Azusa Pacific University and is working toward a degree in music composition.

Peterson’s approach to drumline performances is to create an emotional experience for the player and the audience by telling a story. At the WGASC competition, Peterson’s ensemble combined The Chordettes 1954 hit “Mr. Sandman” with Metallica’s “Enter Sandman,” using additional vocalists to enhance the performance, a stylistic mashup that proved to be a winner with the judges.

“I returned to San Dimas because I want to make it a good experience for the players, many of whom I worked with when I was a student,” Peterson said. “In competition, your job is to stand out from the other bands, while connecting with the audience and judges. There are visual and musical aspects. What is the story we’re trying to tell? Where is the music leading us? Every performance should tell a story.”

Peterson has also expanded the percussion ensemble with the addition of a student tech team, which is responsible for audio tech and mixing. The best part of returning to San Dimas, Peterson said, is reuniting with Beckford.

“Hunter was a standout performer and is eager to share what he has learned with the students,” Beckford said. “He is trusted by his peers and brings a unique enthusiasm to the percussion section.”

MORE



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The Royal Corps Color Guard is led by husband-and-wife coaches Dylan Martin and Mariela Hernandez. The varsity squad won a gold medal in 2025 and the program continues to expand, with a new junior varsity team added for the 2025-26 school year, reflecting the increased popularity of the sport at both San Dimas High and Lone Hill Middle School. The JV team, which consists of five San Dimas students and 13 Lone Hill students, earned a gold medal in its first year.

In a show titled “Til I’m Dead,” Color Guard members dressed as zombies and performed to Lady Gaga’s “The Dead Dance.” Lone Hill eighth-grader and JV captain Milena Villalba, as well as eighth-grader and JV lieutenant Charlotte Onyshko, have embraced the opportunity to compete at a high level.

“I am proud of what we’ve been able to accomplish, especially with this year’s team,” Onyshko said. “Color Guard has great community and sets high expectations. It makes me happy to see us win and see the team get emotional over the victory. It’s a great experience.”

Villalba said the pressure-filled Color Guard performances can be a little chaotic, but like Onyshko, she finds stability and purpose when around her team.

“Every Color Guard member is so nice. This is really the safest space there is,” Villalba said. “For me, competitions tend to be very stressful, but I love to compete, especially for a championship. I was in band last year but I saw how fun Color Guard is and decided to join. Our coaches make it like a family and I really enjoy it.”

For Martin and Hernandez, the ability to share their talents with young students and develop their skills to a championship level is something to cherish. Now in their second year at San Dimas High, the couple said they feel blessed to work at a school district that is so devoted to the performing arts.

“These kids, they healed something in us at a time when we were dealing with some issues,” Martin said. “For San Dimas to be so successful, it is such a joy to see our kids fall in love with the spirit of Color Guard. Mariela and I didn’t have that growing up, so it’s important for us to give them a rewarding experience, as they have rewarded us with their enthusiasm, creativity, and passion.”

PHOTOS:

BUSD_SDHS_ROYALCORPS1: The San Dimas High School Royal Corps Color Guard’s junior varsity team celebrates a successful first season, which included a first-place finish in its division.

BUSD_SDHS_ROYALCORPS2: San Dimas High School’s Percussion Ensemble is all smiles after winning a gold medal in its division for the first time since 2010.