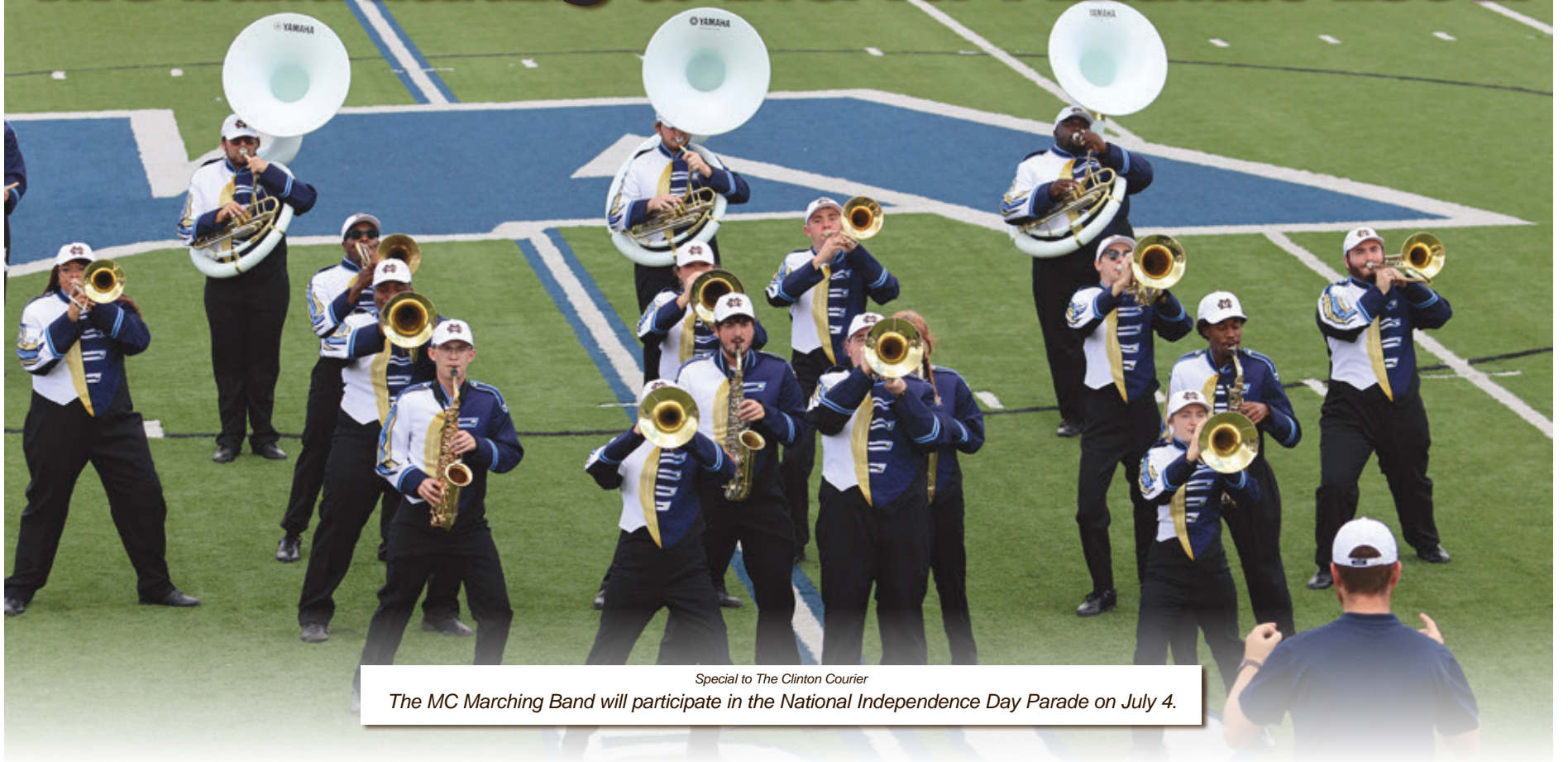


# MC band heading to D.C. for America's 250th



Special to The Clinton Courier  
The MC Marching Band will participate in the National Independence Day Parade on July 4.

By Cara Pridemore

Independence Day is one of the most important holidays for an American, and this year's celebration is especially significant, coinciding with the nation's semiquincentennial, or 250th anniversary, as well as Mississippi Christian University's bicentennial, marking 200 years since its founding. Together, university leaders say these milestones make this Independence Day a truly momentous occasion.

In honor of the celebration, members of the Mississippi Christian Marching Band are set to perform in Washington, D.C. at the annual National Independence Day Parade. The group includes twenty-six current students along with a small amount of alumni. Notably, the MC Band is the only band representing the state of Mississippi in the parade.

The opportunity first arose two years ago, when Music Celebrations International reached out to Duval Salvant, the director of bands at MC, with the opportunity to perform in D.C.

"The best part about marching bands is they can go anywhere, but now we get to be on the national stage," Salvant said. "This is literally a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for these students. I made the joke the other day that we can do it for the 300th anniversary, but I probably won't be walking then."

Parade preparations have included travel planning, fundraising efforts and music rehearsals. The band has partnered with the MC Foundation, which has helped raise funds and secure loans to support students.

"We raised enough money to have every student's price tag cut in half," Salvant said. "That's a lot of money to put toward these students, and every penny is absolutely worth it. For everybody who's donated, it's such a wonderful thing to help us go do these things."

Band members have also organized a ticket raffle and led their own individual

fundraising initiatives.

The parade is a mile long, allowing time for two pieces. The first, "Bicentennial March," was composed specifically for this occasion by Dr. James Sclater, a retired MC professor of music theory. Sclater's composition was premiered by the band in April in a joint concert with the MC Singers in Alumni Hall.

"We're only going to play a small portion of his larger work in D.C., but we'll be marching down the street playing our Mississippi [Christian] Bicentennial music for the 250th," Salvant said.

Salvant is still finalizing the second music selection, but he hopes to showcase Mississippi's musical legacy through a local artist or composer, such as Elvis Presley, Jimmy Buffett or Jim Henson with the Muppets.

"We're probably only going to have one or two rehearsals of the real deal," Salvant said. "We'll learn it here with the current students, but we're not going to have a full band rehearsal of what we're doing all but twice, if that."

Students say they are eager to take part in the experience. Sarah Coleman, a junior and three-year flute player, and Lily Meadows, a senior, four-year clarinet player and MC Color Guard captain, both expressed excitement about the opportunity.

"I'm hoping that we make our school proud," Coleman said. "I'm hoping we just play really well and show people that we are good at what we do, and that we love what we do."

The students say they are also proud to represent MC, especially with the recent name change to Mississippi Christian University.

"It's just insane," Meadows said. "I never thought that we would be doing that, or that we'd be afforded this opportunity to represent Mississippi [Christian] and bring it into greater light. It's so honoring to get to honor a place that has helped me become who I am."

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