



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Nov. 17, 2023

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Bonita Unified Band Director to March in Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade®

SAN DIMAS/LA VERNE – Two years after returning to the Tournament of Roses Parade after a 30-year hiatus, Bonita Unified band director Kelly Leyva will march in another iconic holiday parade when she joins the Band Directors Marching Band in New York to perform in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade® on Nov. 23.

With a theme of "America's band directors, we teach music, we teach life," the Band Directors Marching Band follows up its inaugural appearance in the 2022 Tournament of Roses Parade with an expanded lineup that includes 400 band directors from across the country, representing every state in the union. Leyva will once again play mellophone with the band, as she did in the Tournament of Roses Parade.

"I'm really excited to do this. I've never marched in the Macy's parade, it's a whole new experience," Leyva said. "Our performance at the Rose Parade was very well-received and made quite an impact on the national level. Macy's reached out to us to perform at this year's parade and as a group we are beside ourselves with joy. This is an amazing opportunity for band directors to show the world why music education is vital for our children."

Not only will the red coat-clad Band Directors Marching Band receive a national spotlight, they are scheduled to be the second marching band in the parade, and will accompany the Macy's Snoopy balloon on the parade route. In addition to participating in the Macy's parade, the marching band will also perform at a NYC 9/11 memorial wreath-laying on Nov. 20.

The appearance at Macy's will reunite Leyva with one of her most beloved mentors, Darnella Davidson, who was the band director for Los Angeles High School when Leyva, then attending USC as an undergraduate in 1996, arrived at the school as a student teacher. Davidson, now retired, led Los Angeles High School to 25 consecutive city championships during her nearly 40-year career at Los Angeles Unified School District, and inspired Leyva to pursue her own career as a band director.

"I am so excited about marching with Darnella Davidson, who took me under her wing at the very beginning of my teaching career. I have seen her over the years at conferences and band director meetups, but participating in the Macy's parade is like a dream come true," Leyva said. "She is someone I looked up to when I was student teaching and she is so supportive and proud of what I am doing now. It's just a blessing to have such a legend in my sphere of colleagues."

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A popular and energetic music teacher, Leyva is known throughout the District for enthusiastically helping elementary and middle school students find their passion for music at an early age. Now in her 15th year at Bonita Unified, Leyva serves as band director at Lone Hill Middle School and teaches introductory band at Allen Avenue, Ekstrand, Gladstone and Roynon elementary schools.

Leyva's dedication to teaching helped keep the District's music program going during the pandemic; now she is seeing increased numbers in all of her classes, including 70 students in her top middle school program and more than 200 elementary school students spread across four schools. Many of her current students are the younger siblings of Leyva's former students, adding to the family atmosphere felt throughout the Bonita Unified program.

The Band Directors Marching Band is assembled and coordinated by Saluting America's Band Directors, an organization dedicated to highlighting the accomplishments of band directors and music educators across the United States, and is sponsored by the Michael D. Sewell Memorial Foundation.

"Kelly Leyva plays an integral part in the Bonita Unified music education program. Her enthusiasm and spirit have inspired so many young students to pick up an instrument and find a love for music," Superintendent Matt Wien said. "We are so proud that she is representing the District at the highest levels through her participation with the Band Directors Marching Band."

PHOTO:

BUSD_PARADE_LEYVA: Kelly Leyva, who serves as band director at Lone Hill Middle School and teaches introductory band at Allen Avenue, Ekstrand, Gladstone and Roynon elementary schools, will perform in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade® in New York as part of the Band Directors Marching Band.

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