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Marching band makeover

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The University of Louisville marching band's old practice field is bare, with the exception of a dozen or so wandering geese.

On Wednesday, not only did Ty Pennington and his "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition" crew select Patrick Hughes and his family's Buechel home for their upcoming project, but the U of L marching band's practice facilities as well.

"Ty Pennington announced to the band that Patrick wanted to share this moment with his fellow band members," said Dr. Gregory Byrne, director of U of L's marching band. "He wanted to make sure that the band has a new place they can call 'home' as well."

Byrne was pleased with the news, especially since the band has had five different practice fields in the past 11 years.

"Knowing that committed space for the band is finally secured is tremendous news. The fact that the new field will be handicap accessible for present and future students makes this surprise all the better."

Hughes has been a member of the U of L marching/pep band for two years now. When Pennington chose the Hughes family's home for their next makeover, Hughes requested that, in addition, the U of L band get a

piece of the pie.

Today, Pennington and his crew will reveal the new band field to the university, the student band members and the public. Tomorrow the new home will be revealed.

Bruce Henderson and his crew have been working day and night in order to construct the new band practice facility. Henderson, president of Henderson Services and a 1973 Speed School graduate, has overseen the installment of lighting at the site.

"I'm very passionate about helping people, especially someone like Patrick Hughes," Henderson said.

Despite being born without eyes and confined to a wheelchair, Hughes has managed to become a vital asset to U of L's band as one of its trumpeters, and as a source of inspiration for its members.

"Patrick Hughes is a very extraordinary person. He has overcome so many obstacles to get to where he is today, and continues to overcome obstacles," said Jesse Schuler, junior music education major and member of the marching band.

"He deserves all the success that he has achieved. I think it is wonderful that the 'Extreme Makeover' people chose to remodel their home."

Adam Kelly, a junior criminal justice major and Rachael Potash, a senior mathematics major were both on site as their new field was being seeded, painted, and assembled. Both are section leaders of the tuba section and are in their fourth year in the band.

According to Kelly, having a better field might up the band's morale and increase its performance.

"This will increase our ability to have our rehearsal. Think about it, for the football and basketball teams to practice efficiently, they need to have an adequate practice facility. Why is the band any different?" said Schuler.

Many of the band members were grateful for Hughes's contribution.

"The 50 yard line stays a swamp constantly and never has grass," said sophomore music major Ashley Wolf of the band's old practice field. "It will be greatly appreciated once we get to march on the new field for the first time. We all cannot wait to see the brand new field."

According to both Kelly and Potash, without Hughes's request, the band might have been compelled to continue practicing in what Schuler calls "very poor" conditions.

"The story of Patrick Hughes is larger than the moment. It is helping to change lives across the country," said Byrne.

However, concerns arose due to the new band field being built on one of the intramural fields, which students often play on for intramural sports.

Dale Ramsay, director of intramurals, however, made an agreement with the marching band so that the intramural department and the marching band would share the facilities.

"It is still the intramural field," Ramsay said. "The band will be sharing it with us."

As for the old practice field, Vice President of Business Affairs, Larry Owsley, said that no definite plans had been made, but said additional parking was an option.

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