

North Hastings Highlanders recruiting new members



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By Nate Smelle

For more than four decades the North Hastings Highlanders Pipe Band and have been performing at parades and community events such as Remembrance Day ceremonies throughout North Hastings. With only 11 active members currently in the band, a few of which who are approaching retirement, the North Hastings Highlanders are looking to recruit some new bandmates. As the band's pipe major, Bob Shouldice has been performing with the North Hastings Highlanders since 1978. Playing with the band and being part of so many important moments in local history has been incredibly rewarding experience, he said.

Shouldice says that one of the most enjoyable things about playing with the band is when the tunes the drummers are practising mix together with what the pipers are playing during the performance.

?That to me is the most satisfying part of playing,? said Shouldice.

?The other satisfying part of playing is knowing that people are enjoying what you are doing for them. Pipe bands are not that common so when people hear us we often get a very positive reaction from them. When you get that kind of positive reaction from a crowd of people along a parade route sometimes people start clapping spontaneously as you are playing, and they're always disappointed when you stop.?

In hopes of inspiring others to join the band so they too can appreciate this sense of satisfaction, Shouldice says they will be hosting an open house in Bancroft on Thursday, Oct. 25 at the Bancroft Legion starting at 7 p.m. Shouldice says the event will feature a band practice as well as a performance. He encourages anyone above the age of 10 with an interest in learning about what it takes to be part of a pipe band to come out and enjoy the evening.

?I wish I had started earlier,? he said.

?Very often you are best able to pick up things much more quickly when you are young and full of energy and your fingers are more flexible than they are when you get older. We can always find a spot for people, so if they're interested we can work them in.?

Being a small band in a small town, Shouldice said the event is intended to help raise the profile of the band in the community, and hopefully attract some new members. While it takes approximately two years to teach somebody how to play the bagpipes from scratch, he said if someone were to start learning the drums now, they could be ready to perform with the band in time for the Canada Day parade next July.

Pointing out that it is virtually impossible for someone to learn the bagpipes on their own, or off the Internet, Shouldice said the open house will be an excellent opportunity to learn from the experienced pipers and drummers in the band.

?There are tutorials that you can sign up for, but the best way to learn is to have someone show you how to play them,? he said.

?You can learn a certain amount from books and tutorials off the Internet, but nothing beats hands-on learning with real live people.

When people come out and get involved with the band on Thursday night that's what they're getting. You're not getting a canned lesson from an internet tutorial, you are getting real people to show you how to do it.?

As an independent and self-financing band, Shouldice said they have been successful raising money from their performances over the years. What they need now, he said, is more people in the band. Shouldice said there is no fee to participate on Thursday nights, nor is there a membership fee for members of the band. Although the band does provide the drums for their members, he said pipers are expected to purchase their own bagpipes.

For more information on the open house and the North Hastings Highlanders visit their Facebook page, or contact pipe major Bob Shouldice at 613-637-1084.