



By Natalie Baransy | Photos courtesy of Molly Thobe

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— Shelby Sweinhagen

“Good morning Falcon Marching Band! It’s game day!”

These words were said by Dr. Carol Hayward, director of the Falcon Marching Band, and heard by 250 members standing at attention, ready to begin rehearsal.

It’s 8 a.m. and the excitement of the day ahead has already begun.

Whether it’s been at a halftime show or a homecoming parade, most Falcons have seen and heard the marching band. The Falcon Marching Band is the largest student organization on campus and is composed of students from all colleges at the university. On game days, members of the FMB serve as symbols of Falcon spirit and pride.

For Shelby Sweinhagen, a senior FMB member, game day means more than putting on a great halftime show.

She has been the saxophone section leader for two years, and marching band has become her deepest connection to university life. She has been commuting to campus since her freshman year, so joining the marching band helped her make friends, become an involved student, and form a strong connection to the traditions of the University.

“When I first started out, I just thought of it as a fantastic way to continue my musicianship. Now I want people to realize

that this band is a great community,” she said. “You learn a lot of skills, and not just music. You learn leadership skills and social skills. And it’s fun!”

During her second year in the band, Shelby was encouraged by her squad leader and section leader to pursue a leadership position. They were beginning to take notice of Shelby’s musical skills and her willingness to help others, two things that would eventually help her achieve the position of section leader.

“Hearing those things from them was so inspiring,” said Sweinhagen.

One of Sweinhagen’s favorite parts of game day is having breakfast with her saxophone section. Game days always start with a rehearsal, and this can sometimes make for a very early start for FMB members.

“We’re up in the morning together and we encourage sitting by someone different. It helps me as a leader because when we’re together I get to be myself,” said Shelby.

You won’t find members of the FMB sitting down on game days. When they’re not energizing the crowd with a spirit song or their rendition of a popular tune, they are cheering on the team.

“The marching band is similar to Freddie Falcon and SIC SIC in the sense that we rally people up. One of my favorite memories was when we were doing really

“We push the entire crowd to cheer for the football team.”

— Shelby Sweinhagen

well in a game and the score was really close. [The band] started the wave and it went around the stadium about five times. It was a great way to bring people together,” she said.

Falcon football fans can always count on hearing the live version of the University’s spirit songs on game day. Playing songs like “Forward Falcons” and “Aye Ziggy Zoomba” create a musical connection between the band and the fans. “If we weren’t here they’d be playing recordings. We push the entire crowd to cheer for the football team,” she said.

Since being a music major is not a requirement for being in the band, the Falcon Marching Band is comprised of students with

a wide array of interests. Talking with fellow band members every day allows Sweinhagen to learn the exciting things going on in other colleges of the University.

“I would know nothing about the science department or the education department if it wasn’t for band,” she said. “It shows how diverse this band can be, but we connect so well and are one huge family.”

Some of Sweinhagen’s closest friendships were formed throughout her time in the marching band. Members of the band spend approximately twelve hours a week together in rehearsal and sectionals. Outside of rehearsal, most sections of the band plan social events to promote a positive atmosphere among its members.

For Sweinhagen, being a Falcon Marching Band member has been a valuable experience, and not just because of the way it has helped her grow musically.

Being a member of the band has helped her develop lasting friendships, grow in her leadership abilities and help other reach their full potential as a musician and as a leader.

“Helping people is what I absolutely love the most,” she said.

And in the Falcon Marching Band, helping others is one thing that will always be in tune. ■ KEY

## TYPICAL GAME DAY SCHEDULE:

**Bowling Green**  
vs. **Western Michigan**  
OCTOBER 18TH, 2014

### 8:00 am

The band meets at the practice field for rehearsal. Stretches, warm-ups, and playing exercises.

### 8:23 am

The traditional ballad entitled “Chorale” is played.

### 9:00 am

Full show run-through.

### 11:15 am

“Pre-flight” show.

### 1:45 pm

The FMB energizes fans with their pregame show.

### 3:32 pm

The FMB performs their halftime show, “Green Day on Broadway.”

### 5:30 pm

The band exits the stadium to the cadence played by the drumline.

### 5:40 pm

Dismissal. The band will be back at it on Monday at 4 pm!

