

Conant Band Member Heading to Macy's Parade

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Emily Griffis' family has always had a very important Thanksgiving tradition—watching the Macy's Day Parade. This year, though, the holiday will look a bit different in the Griffis household, because Emily isn't just watching—she (along with her piccolo) is off to New York to march in the Macy's Day Parade.

A junior at James B. Conant High School, Griffis has loved music her entire life, having played the piano since third grade, flute since fifth, and piccolo since seventh. After coming to Conant, she



joined the Cougar Marching Band which performs every Friday during home games. Through her dedication to music and performance, Griffis was named one of the 2024 drum majors for the band.

As Griffis is approaching her final years of high school, she has noted that she plans to continue with her musical passion through auditions for ensembles outside of school and pursuing a degree and career in music education.

But how did she even hear about this opportunity? When Griffis was a freshman, she was mentored by an older member of Conant's marching band who encouraged her to send a video audition to the Great American Marching Band.

"I was really, really happy, and I honestly didn't really expect to get in," Griffis expressed in response to her acceptance letter. But surprise isn't the only emotion that Griffis is feeling in regards to this opportunity. She's also incredibly proud to represent the state of Illinois.

"Not many people from here get selected for this opportunity," she said.

Its exclusivity isn't limited to Illinois. Nationwide, only 225 students are handpicked to participate in the event. Griffis described this acceptance as surreal, but what she's most excited about is making her family proud and feeling their support from miles away. "I feel accomplished."

"Emily is an amazing student and has done a wonderful job as Conant High School's drum major this year. She worked so hard at creating recordings and a solid audition for this opportunity and we're very excited that she's representing our school in the Macy's Marching Band. I'm so excited for her to meet other band students from around the country, make lifetime friends in just a few days, and experience an event that she'll never forget," said Conant High School band teacher Leanne Roder-Manson.

Griffis is most excited about touring the city and seeing the Rockettes, along with meeting new people at rehearsal and performing with a high level group of musicians.

"I looked up to the marchers in the parade, and little me would have no idea she would be here now," she said.

Griffis's advice to fellow musicians is "audition because you never know." She stated it's hard to know how good one is compared to relative musicians, but encourages others to take the time out of their day to audition for something new and not to doubt themselves.



"Just auditioning would make you a better musician, and allow you to get out of your comfort zone. Anyone who wants to join, we would love to have you," she said.

Griffis's hard work, dedication, and passion for music have brought her to this extraordinary moment, and she hopes her story inspires others to chase their dreams.

Griffis, along with the entire

Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade will broadcast on NBC and stream on Peacock beginning at 8:30 on November 28.