

Alton High's Marching 100 prepares for upcoming season at band camp

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ALTON – An electronic metronome chirps, keeping the tempo for the 155 students on the practice fields behind **Alton High School**. After hearing their instructions from their fearless leader, director **Alyssa Cudney**, and a quick countdown of “five, six, seven, eight,” the members of the **Marching 100** step off and move to the next set of their field show.

For most of the high school's students, the teens are enjoying their last few weeks of summer, taking vacations with their families, sleeping in or beating the scorching heat by swimming in cool pools or playing video games inside. The members of the Marching 100, however, sacrifice one full week of their summer to work over eight hours a day toward their ultimate end game: flawless half-time performances and the highly anticipated competition season.

“Our work ethic is fantastic. It’s an entirely new group. The freshmen are busting tail to get stuff learned and they’re working super hard, which has been a little unprecedented. I’m super excited about it,” Cudney said. “We are marching 155 this year with 40 freshmen. We have 30 seniors this year so numbers are kind of evening out.”

Although the hot and humid temperatures are trying on anyone who is spending over eight hours on the practice field, the students are showing extreme amounts of dedication and perseverance. Like the musicians and color guard members on the field, it takes time to learn some of the new behaviors that are necessary to be a part of the Marching 100. Changing behavior also just so happens to play a pivotal role in the band’s untitled field show routine.



“It’s a trance or hypnosis-like show. It’s all about going into that trance to try to change behavior. We start out a little scared and start to relax a little bit. Then, in imagination,

we decide our behaviors is okay and afterwards we kind of snap out of it. That's kind of the whole progression for the show."

This entire week of practice helps the musicians and guard members get their grips on the field show routines that they will be taking to competitions in both Illinois and Missouri this fall. The Marching 100 will head to face one of their biggest local opponents, **Edwardsville High School**, in their own marching competition at the **Edwardsville Sports Complex** in just a couple of months.

"We're with the big boys and have been for a couple years, so it's been tough," Cudney said. "We're hoping that this year we can come into our own and hopefully make people notice us."

Fans of the Marching 100 will have the opportunity to hear the band perform before their first home game at the **Red and Gray Scrimmage on Aug. 19. at Public School Stadium.** The band will suit up for their first home game performance on **Sept. 2** against **Quincy.**

"It will be a very visual show. We've got some tricks up our sleeves. It's a little more serious of a show, but it'll still be just as fun," Cudney said. "We've got some cool moves going right now and the kids really think it's awesome."

Looking forward to the rest of the season, the director is excited to see what the group can do with the amount of determination they are also exhibiting this early in the process.

"I hope that they just keep pushing themselves forward, that they become more and more of a family, of a unit," she said. "If they keep pushing the way they have with these first few days, we're going to be phenomenal."

