

For Immediate Release

**BALLOU HIGH SCHOOL:
THE MARCHING BAND TO WATCH AT THE UPCOMING
TOURNAMENT OF ROSES PARADE
PASADENA, CA - JANUARY 1, 2009**

BALLOU, A Documentary film brought music and arts back into the entire DC Public School System and changes the way we look at music and arts education.

The bands story gained political, education and entertainment awareness and is like no other marching at this year's parade celebration!

Washington D.C. -- **Ballou High School's** marching band members, the **Majestic Marching Knights**, led by Darrell Watson have overcome tremendous odds and are now one of the nation's most recognized marching bands. This is due in part to their life story being told in **BALLOU, a documentary film** which captures the daily struggles of living and growing up in one of the most neglected neighborhoods in the country, South East Washington, DC.

The DVD will be released nationwide November 18, 2008.

Their encouraging story has been celebrated by political, entertainment and news leaders and they were selected out of hundreds of applicants to perform with 18 other marching bands at the annual **Tournament of Roses Parade** on Thursday, January 1, 2009 at 8 a.m. (PST). Millions of spectators from around the world will celebrate the New Year with the **120th Rose Parade** themed *Hats Off To Entertainment*.

This amazing high school band and its tireless, all volunteer staff have had quite a year gaining the respect, admiration and appreciation from the entire D.C. community. As coverage expanded from local news to national media attention, they caught the eye of First Lady Laura Bush who asked the film to be presented at the White House. Band Leader Darrell Watson and band members shared their joy on **Good Morning America** and **The Ellen DeGeneres Show**. **ABC World News** honored them as the *Persons of the Year* (2007) and the Mayor of Washington, DC Adrian Fenty declared June 13th, 2008 as *Ballou Band Day* in the District of Columbia. The film includes special appearances with Rev. Jesse Jackson, Gen (ret.) Colin Powell, DC Mayor Adrian Fenty and Congressman John Lewis talking about the school band and the positive affect their music has on the DC community.

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The story of the Ballou band that unfolds in the documentary was the catalyst for incredible change in the District of Columbia. After the theatrical release of the film, District leaders sent new band instruments to every school. Additionally, DC Schools Chancellor, Michelle Rhee, re-established music and arts at every school at every level.

"One of the best ways to increase student achievement is through delivering a broad based curriculum - and music education is a critical piece to that process," said DC Public School Chancellor Michelle Rhee. "Last year DC public schools received \$1.4 million dollars in band and orchestra instruments along with 130 pianos and for the first time nearly 100 percent of our schools now have music teachers. As we continue this massive reform effort it's clear that music education will play a vital role."

Ballou High School is in a neighborhood rocked by crime, poverty, drugs and despair. Ballou High School has the highest crime and poverty rates in the country with an over 50% drop-out rate.

Darrell Watson, who is an alumnus of Ballou High School, decided to return to his alma mater to attempt to repay the music program for saving his own life. After becoming the leader of the Ballou marching band, he was able to eradicate the negativity from the students' hearts - - negativity wrought through a public image of South East DC as a dangerous, uncivilized, forgotten place – through his dedication and compassion. Together they have brought a positive change to their school and their community with music, dedication, hard work, discipline and a bit of pride – and it changed their lives as well.

"We have come a long way and we struggled and struggled...I am so happy to have our story told in this documentary so it can help motivate teachers, educators and volunteers nationwide to believe that they can make dreams happen with nothing more than belief and dedication!" --*Darrell Watson, Ballou Marching Band Director*

Within the last three years, the ***Majestic Marching Knights*** have competed throughout the nation and have placed in the top 5. All 14 senior band members from the film **BALLOU** graduated and went on to college

Along the theme of this years Rose Parade, "Hats off to Entertainment," Hats off" indeed -- to a team of young minds who took the initiative to get involved in an extracurricular school activity and overcome their daily trials and tribulations.

The Majestic Marching Knights will perform again on national television in New York City during the annual **Macy's Parade** on Thanksgiving Day 2009, when only 11 bands from the country were selected.

In addition to the parades and media buzz, a Hollywood major motion picture is in the works with the original filmmakers of **BALLOU, a documentary film**.

The DVD will be available on Amazon, Barnes and Noble, Borders and iTunes. You can also rent the DVD on Netflix or order it online at www.balloumovie.com.

To book the band leader, band or filmmakers on your show, please contact Garnier Public Relations, Danielle Garnier 773-276-0232 danielle@garnierpr.com prior to December 31, 2008

Photos, film footage and press kits are also available
