

Dear Parents and Future Chaperones ~

I started last year's letter talking about how Brett Favre had hung up his cleats, and I could do the same this year, but I am not sure that it would have the same effect. Whatever Brett ultimately decides, Lutheran Vanguard marches along toward its 32nd season. I am so deeply, sincerely grateful to all of the men and women who have stepped up to take part in so many different ways to help LVW carry out its mission. Serving the Lord whilst serving our kids, whether as a chaperone or with uniforms, food, Band Camp, loading and unloading the truck – whatever it is – I have witnessed some awesome and touching displays of Christian service.

What does it mean to be a chaperone for Lutheran Vanguard? It means traveling with the kids and doing whatever it takes to get the band from one point to another, and to oversee the safety and well being of those wonderful young people. Mainly, we keep them hydrated before, during and after parades, help with serving the meals, load and unload the truck, and basically help out with little things here and there to keep things running smoothly. It is not rocket science, and along the way we get to see and enjoy the kids as they present their gifts to our Lord and people along the parades that we march in. For the sacrifice of a little bit of sleep, we are compensated with fun, laughter and friendships that last a lifetime.

Please consider this an open invitation to join us for the 2009 season as a chaperone or in any number of ways that match your time or talents. This is not a tour year, but we have five weekends of activities, with the longest trip being five days, and a bunch of great regular weekend trips mixed in. I have rarely enjoyed anything in my life as much as I enjoy traveling with LVW. What have you got to lose by volunteering? What? OK, a little sleep - I will grant you that. And to ward off against some of the less than, shall we say cultural, movie choices that the kids might choose to watch on the coach bus trips, you could always bring along one of your favorite movies as an alternative... Fear not, on my watch, we shall never again have "Napoleon Dynamite" inflicted upon our sensibilities.

There are many rewards, both robust and more subtle, to becoming a chaperone. How about considering more precious moments such as hearing the band strike up the first notes of one of their selections for the year as you step off to start a parade? How about the glimpse of heaven that we are afforded when more than 100 voices join together to sing the doxology at the end of every day? I seriously challenge you to find better moments than those this side of heaven. Moments that bring chills down your spine and tears to your eyes – the little bit of lost sleep is compensated far beyond my silly attempts to put these experiences into words. The friendships, the love, the laughter, the memories... all different aspects of the "it" moments in every LVW season.

Besides regular chaperones (and the more the merrier, I mean it...) I'd like to especially encourage people who are in the medical field to join us, as it is a special blessing to have some medical expertise in our midst – with the warm marching weather and well, just having that many teenagers all together... it would give us all a little added measure of comfort. Your contributions would be greatly appreciated. And all parents, please give this vital and wonderful service some prayerful consideration. If you would like, you can consult chaperones from the past, I would be happy to put you in touch with any of them. Thanks for trusting LVW with your children!

In His Service,

Tom Dietzler, LVW Head Chaperone