THE ISHPEMING BLUE NOTES DRUM & BUGLE CORPS

The Blue Notes Drum & Bugle Corps was organized in Ishpeming, Michigan on Halloween night in 1957 as an all-boy, junior corps. Founded by two dedicated young men, Joe Mayrand and Jim Medlyn, the Blue Notes performed in local parades for the first time in the summer of 1958.

In 1959, the Blue Notes added an all-girl color guard, which was under the direction of Marv Blight. In 1960, girls were accepted into the Blue Notes horn line for the first time.

Over the next few years, with strong support of hard working parents and the entire Ishpeming community, along with sponsorship by the American Legion Post 58, money was raised to purchase new uniforms and instruments. With a proud community behind them, the Blue Notes soon grew into a competitive drum and bugle corps, well known throughout the Midwest.

During their twenty-year existences as a competitive junior corps, the Blue Notes competed in contests across the Midwest and Canada, winning numerous titles, including nine state championships. Sadly, despite their successes, membership dwindled, and in 1977 the corps disbanded. Drum and bugle corps music was absent from the Ishpeming area for the next seven years.

In 1984, a group of junior corps alumni, now in their twenties and thirties, reunited to march in the July 4th parade celebrating Ishpeming High School's 100-year reunion. The local parade-goers were overjoyed with the reappearance of the Blue Notes; their clapping and cheering was continuous throughout the entire parade route. Having received such a tremendous reception, the alumni group continued their participation in local parades and soon was traveling throughout the Upper Peninsula, delighting audiences with the big, bold sound of drum and bugle corps music.

The alumni expanded its membership to include not only Blue Notes alumni, but other drum corps alumni and any musicians interested in sharing their talents. Today, the Blue Notes Drum & Bugle Corps has members from across Michigan's U.P., including the communities if Ishpeming, Negaunee, Marquette, Ontonagon, Kingsford and Hurley, Wisconsin.

As the years went by, members of the corps came to realize that the group's continued existence would require a strong recruiting drive. A committee was formed to concentrate on recruiting new members. They targeted younger musicians -- those aged 18 to 21 -- in order to ensure the corps would remain vibrant even after its older members retired. The recruiting committee's efforts successfully brought several younger members into the group. After seeing the enthusiasm these young people had for drum and bugle corps activity, the Blue Notes extended membership to high school students.

The 2017 Blue Notes "60th Anniversary Corps" has members ranging in age from 14 to 70. They come from all walks of life, but are united by a passion for drum and bugle corps music. Marquette County's only drum and bugle corps, and one of two active drum and bugle corps in the Upper Peninsula, the Blue Notes are the pride of Ishpeming. Every summer they perform across the U.P. -- marching in parades, playing at community celebrations, keeping the drum and bugle corps tradition alive throughout the region.