

Spring band festival gets new life in Fairfield

By [Amy Maginnis-Honey From page B1](#) | April 24, 2015

FAIRFIELD — It's back.

The Northern California Band Festival returns May 2 to the streets and venues of Fairfield.

The driving force behind the resurrected event is Jennifer Doherty, who heads up the music program at Crystal Middle School. She's joined by Tony Escobedo, who oversees the music program at Holy Spirit School.

The event will feature about 10 bands in parade, concert and jazz competition. The Crystal Music Boosters are the host organization.

The first Northern California Band Festival occurred in 1974, according to research done by Doherty. The last one took place in 2003.

Doherty said she saw the need for a spring band festival and met with Fairfield city officials and Margaret Manzo of the Fairfield Main Street Association to bring it to fruition. The city and the Fairfield Main Street Association are sponsoring the event.

"After it ended, I found myself in conversation with people who had a lot of fond and endearing memories," she said.

The event was a favorite for Doherty.

Escobedo marched in it for five years as a student at Sullivan Middle School and at Armijo High School.

"It's the nostalgia factor," he said. "It's very Americana."

The first Northern California Band Festival was a joint effort between the Fairfield-Suisun Chamber of Commerce and the high school band directors at the time.

In 1987, then-Fairfield High School band director Russ Campbell took the lead in organizing the annual event, Doherty said. Band boosters and the chamber also played key roles.

A year later, it was Bill (Jennifer's husband) Doherty's turn. He is the band director at Vanden High School. Bill Doherty also took the lead on the 1989 festival.

A new parade route, down Dover Avenue, was created. It replaced the march down Texas Street.

The Dover Avenue route was claimed as the Fairfield High School band boosters took on the task of hosting their own event, Tournament of Champions, which still occurs every November.

Armijo High School decided to take on the spring review, calling it the Armijo Band Review. Myriad challenges forced its cancellation, according to Jennifer Doherty's research.

Jennifer Doherty had about two months to pull the festival together.

"It's been crazy," she said. "I knew it would be challenging."

In its heyday, Doherty said the festival attracted between 40 and 60 bands from all over Northern California. She's confident the number will increase next year and that the event will continue to flourish.

The parade is slated from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. It will step off from Kentucky Street and travel down Texas Street.

Concert competition begins at 8:15 a.m. at the Fairfield Center for Creative Arts, 1035 Texas St. It should end about 2:30 p.m.

The jazz competition is at the Fairfield Community Center, 1000 Kentucky St. Performances begin at 1:20 p.m. and will continue until about 4:15 p.m.

The awards ceremony will follow on the lawn area at Texas and Jefferson streets.

All events are free. A program can be purchased the day of the event.

Trophy sponsors and volunteers are needed. For more information, send an email to Jennifer Doherty at jenniferd@fsusd.org.

Participating bands are:

- Middle school: Crystal, Grange, Golden West, Pleasant Hill, Carquinez, Solano and Hogan.
- High school: Armijo and John Swett.
- Holy Spirit School will participate in the concert competition.

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