

Inmates help Auburn marching band put on a show

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You might think inmates at the maximum security state prison in Auburn would have seen enough of cellblocks and guard towers.

But about a dozen have spent the past week assembling a set of prison replicas. The props will be used for the Auburn High School Vanguard Marching Field Band's fall show.

The show is titled "Prison City," highlighting the prison as a central part of Auburn's past, present and future.



John Berry / The Post-Standard

JOSE CASTILLO, an inmate at the Auburn Correctional Facility, paints steel bars used to simulate prison bars for props being made for the Auburn High School Vanguard Marching Field Band.

The inmates built jail cell facades and a guard tower for the show. The guard tower includes a ladder and scaffolding that two color guard members will climb during part of the show.

The idea to get inmates involved came from Ted Connors, a sergeant at the prison and former president of the band boosters. He knew inmates working in the vocational program could do this type of work, so he asked prison Superintendent Harold Graham for help.

"I knew we (the school) were on a contingency budget this year and the prison could use materials that were going to be scrapped anyway," said Connors. The Auburn school budget was defeated by voters twice this spring and the school board had to cut about \$600,000 to reach a contingency budget figure.

In doing so, about \$12,000 was cut from the marching band's budget.

"We saved about \$1,500 by bringing the work here," Connors said.

The 120-member band will be wearing black-and-white striped prison jumpsuits. Their musical repertoire: "Mission Impossible," "Jailhouse Rock," "Rescue Me," "Desperado" and "Cellblock Tango."

"We placed second last year in Large School Division 3, so we've got to be one of the favorites going into it this year," said assistant band director Michael Miller. "We're trying to be as creative as we can."

Auburn's field band season begins Sept. 13 at Cicero-North Syracuse.