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CONTACT: STEVE TOLOPKA, PRESIDENT AND MUSIC DIRECTOR

EMAIL: DIRECTOR@TBGO.ORG

PHONE: 503-292-3996



## \$50,000 State Department Grant Helps Band Cross the Pacific

PORTLAND – A century ago, Portland’s association with Shanghai was underground and steeped in mystery. Come September, another band of Portlanders will be “Shanghaied” ... but they can’t wait to go!

“We’re not being spirited away, via tunnels and the holds of schooners. We’re flying to Shanghai, representing our country, and doing what we do best: putting on a great show for hundreds of thousands of parade goers!” says Steve Tolopka, music director of Portland’s **The Beat Goes On** (TBGO) marching band. “And one of the best things is, we’re getting a \$50,000 assist from the U.S. Department of State.”



The Shanghai excursion, starting Sep. 10, involves over 120 band members. It’s the band’s most ambitious trip ever: a parade through the largest city in the world, followed by three days of concerts over 5,700 miles from home. It’s all part of the Shanghai Tourism Festival, whose theme this year is marching bands.

“You know the old Grand Funk Railroad song, ‘We’re an American Band’? asks Tolopka. “Well, we’ve played that song in many parades, but in reality we’re becoming an *international* band.”



Saxophonist Don Price helped pursue the Public Diplomacy Cultural Programming grant from the State Department. (Price is seen to the left with Shanghai Tourism Festival liaison Rose Zhao, holding the band’s formal letter of invitation.)

He learned of the opportunity in January, just before a vacation to China. While there he helped finalize the Shanghai invitation, then was part of a team of TBGO grant writers who worked under tight deadlines to make its case to the U.S. Embassy in Beijing. “I felt from the very beginning that something good would come from this. When I heard about the grant opportunity, I felt, in the words of Russell Wilson, the Seattle Seahawks’ Super Bowl winning quarterback, ‘Why not us?’”

It takes dough to blow a horn all the way across the Pacific. TBGO members are paying their own travel expenses to Shanghai, and the grant will help defray some of those costs. Other fund-raising efforts are underway on the band’s Website, <http://www.thebeatgoesonmb.org>.

“We will, indeed, provide a cultural experience for the People’s Republic of China. We are ordinary people who live ordinary lives. We are moms, dads, grandpas and grandmas who love to perform and play music,” says Price. “I believe this is why we were chosen as the sole U.S. band at the Shanghai festival – a point we clearly stated in the grant application. Come September, the Chinese people will get a taste of American culture as it should be experienced – through music performed by ordinary, but inspired, people.”

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**THE BEAT GOES ON MARCHING BAND: More smiles per mile!**

*Want to come out and play?*

Email: [director@tbgo.org](mailto:director@tbgo.org)

Website: <http://www.tbgo.org/>

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/TheBeatGoesOnMarchingBand](http://www.facebook.com/TheBeatGoesOnMarchingBand)