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TOP STORY

## Parade kicks off Homecoming weekend

By JACKSON FRENCH [jfrench@bgdailynews.com](mailto:jfrench@bgdailynews.com) Oct 13, 2017



Twirler Madalynn Alt performs during the Homecoming Parade on Friday, Oct. 13, 2017, at Circus Square Park. (Austin Anthony/)

photos by Austin Anthony/[photo@bgdailynews.com](mailto:photo@bgdailynews.com)

Wicked witches, cowardly lions and tin men could be seen up and down the Avenue of Champions and State Street between the southern edge of Western Kentucky University's campus and Circus Square Park to celebrate the school's homecoming weekend.

This year's parade was a caravan of homecoming queen candidates riding in the back of convertibles tossing out candy, and floats exploring the theme of "There's No Place Like Home," fusing Cherry Hall and Big Red with imagery from "The Wizard of Oz" like the Yellow Brick Road, tornadoes, the Emerald City and the movie's iconic characters.

One Tin Man, WKU freshman and Phi Delta Theta pledge Brady Munford, wearing gray sweats, a gray hoodie, a boxy torso made of posterboard spray-painted silver and carrying a sledgehammer that he thought would be safer than an ax, said he was excited to be a part of the school's homecoming celebration.

"I think it's an awesome thing," he said. "I think it does get all the Greek organizations to come together and do something that involves the whole community."

Munford said he enjoyed the process of making his fraternity's float, which featured a red hot air balloon and Big Red dressed as Glenda the Good Witch, both rendered with a tissue paper exterior.

"It was really cool," he said. You got to meet new people. It was a good chance to communicate with people."

Munford also said he was excited about the chance to be the Tin Man for the parade.

"I get to carry around a sledgehammer and wear a silly costume," he said.

Though WKU's office of admissions participates in the parade every year, this marks the first year the group made a float, according to Jessica Basham, the office's communications coordinator, who was dressed as Glenda the Good Witch.

Basham said participating in the parade is an office tradition because many people in the office, herself included, graduated from WKU.

“It’s one of my favorite things about WKU because so many people in the office are alumni and it’s kind of special to us,” she said.

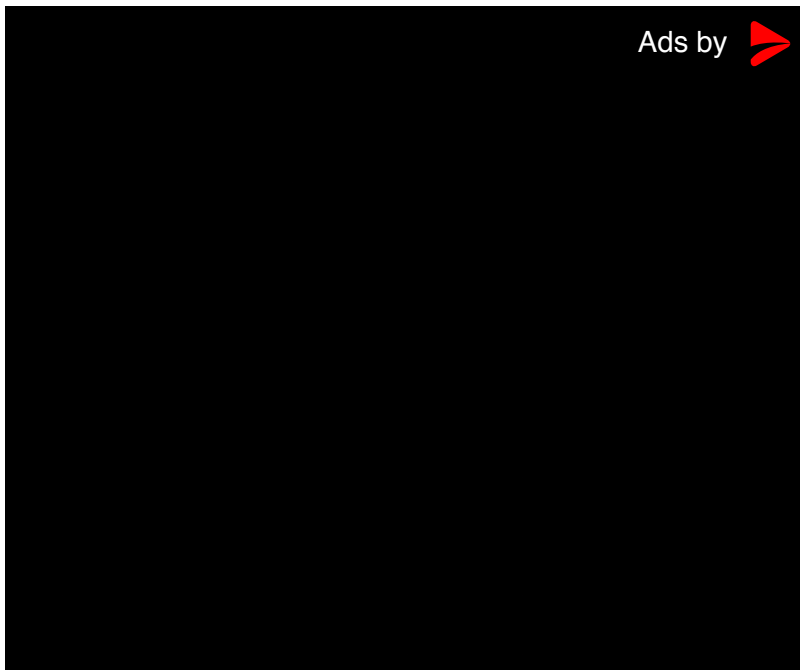
Hunter Ricketts, a WKU sophomore who lounged in the grass beside the Avenue of Champions as the parade rolled past, said he was impressed with the way different groups interpreted the parade’s “No Place Like Home” theme.

“I love seeing all the creativity,” he said. “People took the same basic idea and blew it out of the water.”

Ricketts said he loves the passion that homecoming brings to the forefront.

“I think it’s just one of those things every school needs,” he said. “It brings out a sense of pride.”

WKU alum Dale Davis came from Portland, Ore., to see the parade and said it brought back memories of growing up in Bowling Green and going to school at WKU.



He was also thrilled to see the collaboration and ingenuity of the students who put the floats together, he said.

“It restores my faith in this country to see all these bright young people wrapped up in wholesome activities,” he said.

WKU President Timothy Caboni, who walked in the parade, said the parade was a “remarkable celebration.”

“I’m from New Orleans and I was looking for the beads and the doubloons,” he said.

This was Caboni’s first time participating in WKU’s homecoming parade and he said he’s impressed with how the university handles homecoming.

“I’ve been to lots of universities all across the country and Western does homecoming as well as all of them and better than most,” he said.

Caboni had to share the spotlight with former WKU President Gary Ransdell, who with his wife, Julie, rode in the back of a Mustang near the front of the parade.

Ransdell, who was in town for his induction into the Hall of Distinguished Alumni, said participating in the parade was “a great experience.”

“The Hilltopper spirit will be in our hearts forever,” he said.

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