

As I sit here to write this letter, I hope you and your family are all healthy and happy this holiday season. It's been a bit chilly here, but we've actually been pretty fortunate to have such nice winter weather. As many of you know, I am involved in the XYZ High School Color Guard. I've marched at XYZ for three years now and it has become one of the things I love most and desire to be good at. With that said, I practice a lot. (Maybe even a little more than I should!) I'm the "idiot" who is outside spinning rifle in 20 degrees, risking breaking all of my fingers, just to make sure I have my solo toss perfect before the big competition. With anything, a little hard work and dedication will get you a long way, and color guard is no exception. I've gone from being a person who could barely get through the basics, to one of the leaders on the team. I decided this past fall that it was time to step it up even further.

In the United States, there is an organization called *Drum Corps International*. To best describe it, would be to call it a "professional marching band," but even that is inaccurate. The horn line has all brass instruments, and they are accompanied by a color guard, drum line, and front ensemble. Kids from ages 16-21 come together every summer and march a very difficult show. They spend about a month learning the show, and then take it on tour, traveling around the country, and performing it for a different city every night. There are many different corps, each bringing something amazing to the field, and they compete against each other at numerous competitions, similar to what I do in high school. Last November, I decided to take the first step in joining the activity. Auditioning.

I spent a weekend in Dubuque, Iowa with the Colts Drum & Bugle Corps. They taught me a dance and a flag routine, then assessed me on how well I learned it, retained the information, and how well I dealt with the hard choreography and flag work. Most people attend two audition camps and the instructors measure growth, which then they are either offered a contract, or encouraged to audition next year. I learned that very weekend that I am not like most people. I was one of the few who got offered a contract after my very first audition camp.

My parents, my coaches from XYZ, and those who knew about it were ecstatic. Don't get me wrong, I was very happy too, but I had a major decision to make. Drum corps is not easy. For my entire summer I would get up at 8:00 in the morning, do calisthenics for an hour, march until about 9:00-10:00 at night, shower, eat, go to bed, wake up and do it all over again! I would only get one or two free days my entire summer. I went back for the December camp to help me decide whether I really wanted to go or not, and after one rifle block with the head guard instructor, I was more discouraged and scared than I had ever been in my entire decision making process. I still consider her rifle block to be the hardest thing I've ever done, and I didn't appreciate all of the difficult comments at the time, but it only took a couple days to laugh at myself about that night and want to go back.

After weighing out the pros and cons with my parents, all of the long night conversations, all the people convincing me to stay, or to go, I've made my decision. As of today, I have signed the contract and I will be marching with the Colts Drum & Bugle Corps for their 2012 season.

After announcing the good news, I'd like to thank a few people. First, a big THANK YOU to my Mom (*name*) and my Dad (*name*). You two have been, and always will be, my biggest fans. I know that we will miss each other in the ten weeks I'm gone, but you have raised me to be a strong, independent person who lives every day to enjoy what I do. I'm so glad that you are allowing me to "live out the dream" and march drum corps like I have talked about since I started color guard. (*Mom's*) Family, thank you for always being there for me, through thick and thin. I will miss every single one of you, and I know that you will all be thinking of me, as I will be thinking of you. It will be hard missing all of the summer family traditions that we have, but you all know that I love what I'm doing. (*Dad's*) Family, though all of you are at least a couple hours away, you'd never hesitate to jump in your car and drive here if I needed you. I will miss spending a few weeks of summer with you, but remember that you could always come spend a couple weeks with me on tour! I'd like to thank my close family friends that have always supported me in whatever I did. Just because we don't have the same blood or last name, certainly doesn't mean we are not family. I'd like to thank all of the staff and students of the XYZ Marching Wildcats. Mrs. _____ (Band Director) for always encouraging me to be the best and pushing me until I get there, _____ (Visual) for teaching me that I could be as good as I wanted to be, and for all of your hard work with the program (and for taking me to camps, too!). _____ (Color Guard) for teaching me everything I know, and inspiring me to march with the Colts. My fellow Marching Wildcats, I hope you march your hearts out at band camp and remember me while I'm gone. I'll eventually find my way back to where I started this journey. If you are reading this letter, THANK YOU. You have impacted me somehow/someway and I thank you for that! I have an amazing support system from my family, friends, and coaches. I will never take their love, kind words, or moral support for granted. I am very blessed to have so many wonderful people in my life who have helped me get where I am today. I love you all.

The newest addition of the Colts,

Jane Doe

