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Broncho Marching Band performs for Pope as part of musical journey across Italy

*Highly successful European trip part of district's commitment to
fine arts, exposing students to new cultures, history*

HOLLY, Mich. — For 70 members of the **Holly High School Broncho Marching Band**, a recent trip to Italy was a once-in-a-lifetime adventure that expanded their worldviews across some of Italy's most iconic cities and historical sites.

The trip culminated with a New Year's Day performance at St. Peter's Square at the Vatican before a crowd of thousands, where Pope Francis personally acknowledged the Broncho Marching Band and thanked them for their performance in his address.

"The unparalleled opportunity for our Broncho Marching Band to perform in St. Peter's Square before Pope Francis will be a cherished memory for everyone involved for the rest of their lives," said Band Director **Ben Baldwin**. "Our amazing adventure in Italy opened our students up to new experiences and cultures outside the band room and strengthened the bond between our students, their families and our Broncho community."

The marching band members were accompanied by 100 adults, including family members, during the overseas trip Dec. 27 through Jan. 3. The travelers explored the Tuscany region, where they toured Florence, the picturesque town of Montecatini and Pisa, home of the famous leaning tower. In Montecatini, the band performed in a parade into the center of town. The group also toured the historic town of Siena, known for its well-preserved medieval architecture. In Rome, the students explored museums, the Colosseum, the Pantheon, the Trevi Fountain and the Roman Forum, and they toured the Sistine Chapel, home of the famous ceiling painted by Michelangelo.

On the final day of the trip, the group traveled to Pompeii, the ancient Roman city preserved by the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 A.D., where they got an up-close look at life during the Roman Empire.

“I would like to congratulate the Broncho Marching Band for such a successful journey overseas, where they demonstrated to new audiences with #BronchoPride is all about,” said **Scott Roper**, Holly Area Schools superintendent. “This trip was yet another example of our commitment to providing our Bronchos with new and exciting opportunities outside school that help prepare them for the real world and success. I would like to thank Director Baldwin, our families and chaperones who made this phenomenal trip possible for our students.”

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Learn more about Holly Area Schools by visiting www.hask12.org, or visit us on [Facebook](#) and [X](#) (Twitter).



Broncho Marching Band Director Ben Baldwin, front left, Broncho Marching Band members and chaperones arrive at the airport in Italy.



The Broncho Marching Band performs at St. Peter's Square at the Vatican.



The Broncho Marching Band percussion section performs at the Vatican.



The Broncho Marching Band poses in Vatican City.



The Broncho Marching Band performs in Montecatini, Italy.