

Hawthorne Caballeros



Membership Policies

and

Parent Handbook

Updated 11/2025



Welcome to the Hawthorne Caballeros Drum and Bugle Corps! Our mission is to provide an environment for members of all ages that fosters continued education in the performing arts. We have won 49 State, 16 National, and 10 World Championships since our founding in 1946. Our world class and extremely talented staff is excited to welcome you or your child into our family. The Hawthorne Caballeros is a wonderful place for anyone to continue learning and growing in the marching arts outside of a scholastic setting. This handbook should serve as a guideline for you or your child's membership in the drum corps as well as set forth the expectations and commitment of all of the Hawthorne Caballeros members. For any questions you have that are not answered in this handbook, please reach out to the Personnel Manager, Michele Parrino, at michele@hawthornecaballeros.org.

What to expect?

We start our season in November with an Open House where everyone is welcome to come learn and train with our staff to see the day-to-day operations of the drum corps. During the Winter season we meet about once or twice a month for auditions and indoor music rehearsals through March depending on which section you or your child are auditioning to join. The Caption Heads and Staff of each individual section may send out virtual assignments or virtual meetings at their discretion to supplement in person instruction. Starting in April outdoor rehearsals begin where members start honing their marching skills and begin the process of learning the field show. In May and June full ensemble rehearsals begin where all sections practice together and the full production starts to come to life. End of June through mid-August is competition season where we travel to different places along the East Coast and compete with other drum corps in our circuit. We finish our season the second week of August competing in the DCI All-Age World Championships in Indianapolis, IN. The Hawthorne Caballeros rehearse every Friday evening, Saturday, and Sunday starting in May. **It is critical that every performer is in attendance at all rehearsals and performances.**

Attendance Policy

All scheduled rehearsals, performances, parades, competitions, and appearances are mandatory for every member of the Hawthorne Caballeros Drum and Bugle Corps. During the winter and spring season we believe scholastic commitments should take priority over drum corps commitments. However, we ask that starting in May the commitment to the drum corps takes priority over all else. All anticipated absences must be communicated to the Personnel Manager and Caption Head a minimum of 2 weeks in advance through the absence request form on the corps website. The request will be reviewed and approved by the caption head. If the absence is not approved and the member still misses rehearsal, it will result in an “unexcused absence” on the members record. Any absences that are not communicated to the drum corps in advance will automatically be unexcused.

Multiple unexcused absences will result in a change to “alternate” status, and excessive unexcused absences will result in termination of the members contract. Alternate status means that a member will still participate in rehearsal with the corps but their position could be filled by another alternate, member, or recruit that is in good standing. Alternates are not guaranteed participation in competitions. Good standing may be earned back at the discretion of the Caption Head and approved by the Executive Board. Any member at risk of being placed on alternate status will be given fair warning.

Acceptable reasons for excused absences include: illness, death in the family, and academic commitments that are unavoidable. **All personal time (such as work, studying, homework, vacations, family gatherings, birthday parties, etc.) must be scheduled to avoid conflicting with the drum corps schedule.** Other requests will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Early and frequent communication about conflicts is appreciated.

Please find a full season schedule at the end of this handbook for your planning purposes. Please note that all schedules and locations are subject to change.

Audition & Contracting Process

Each caption head will dictate the audition process for their section. There are a limited number of spots available in each section of the drum corps. Auditions are necessary to ensure that each member is given a position that is equal to their talent and ability. Once a member is offered a spot, they will be emailed a contract to sign that includes our membership policies, the attendance policy, financial plan, equipment release, health forms, media policy, and member safety policy. For members under the age of 18 parents/guardians will also have to review and sign a copy of the contract. Some auditionees may be contracted as alternates. This could be due to an excess of auditionees in a given section, or other various reasons such as scheduling conflicts. Alternates are expected to rehearse with the drum corps equally as with the fully contracted members as they could be called upon to fill an open position at any given time.

Who Can Audition?

- Anyone who is interested in the Caballeros is welcome to attend our Open House in November to experience a weekend with the drum corps and spend time learning from our staff. All prospective members of the Hawthorne Caballeros will audition for their spot within the corps, even returning members. Auditions will start at Open House and continue until all available spots are filled. Color Guard Auditions are typically held in mid to late April. All sections of the corps are competitive and we recommend having some marching experience and experience on your given instrument or equipment prior to auditioning. Due to the nature of the All-Age activity, all members of the Caballeros must be 16 years of age prior to the corps departing for Indianapolis in August. Exceptions to this rule may be made and/or significant parent involvement may be required. This decision will be made in consultation with the staff and administration to decide what is appropriate for the individual.

Communication

All official corps information will be communicated either by email, or through the corps BAND app. BAND can be found in any app store, and it is free to sign up. Once the season is rolling all members will be required to be on BAND so they can get important information like schedules. Parents are encouraged to join the Parent & Volunteer BAND group so they can also have access to all important information that is shared by the administration.

Financial Obligation

Our Registration/Audition fee is a non-refundable \$80 due prior to the member's first rehearsal camp. The full tuition fee for the 2026 season is \$2500. This fee covers facilities, equipment, professional instruction, insurance, corps provided uniforms, corps provided meals, bussing, transportation and accommodations for World Championships in Indianapolis, and more. This fee does not include any accessory items that are required as part of a members uniform such as, marching/movement shoes, sombrero (hat), gloves, undergarments for underneath the uniform, or makeup for the colorguard. Prices and requirements for those items will be discussed after the member is offered a membership contract.

Tuition Discount Plans

For the 2026 Season we will be offering a discount based on the number of years of membership with the Caballeros. Unless you choose the option to pay in full up front, your tuition will be billed monthly with the full tuition payment due by July 31, 2026. Veteran discounts will be as follows:

- 2nd Year Members: Receive a \$50 discount, \$2450 total
- 3-4 Year Members: Receive a \$100 discount, \$2400 total
- 5+ Year Members: Receive a \$200 discount, \$2300 total
- 10+ Year Members: Receive a \$300 discount, \$2200 total

Pay in Full Up Front Option

If you would prefer to pay your membership tuition all in one installment, we will offer a discount for paying in full within 14 days of signing your membership contract.

- Pay In Full Up Front: \$2200
 - Receive a \$300 discount, payment due at time of contract signing
 - Discount cannot be combined with veteran discount

Payment must be received within 14 days or you will be moved to the monthly payment plan at the higher tuition rate.

Once a member is under contract we will set up a recurring invoice on Square which will be sent to the member and parent/guardian (if applicable) for payment. Members who have not been offered or signed a membership contract will pay a \$80 camp fee to attend camps until a contract is offered. All camp fees will be applied to tuition at contract signing. Camp fees are non-refundable.

Some fundraising opportunities to help raise money towards the tuition obligation will be available throughout the season. Many members have raised significant portions of their tuition through fundraising. Scholarship opportunities will be explored for members in need who show they are making every effort to participate in fundraising and fulfill their membership commitments. Financial hardship must be discussed up front and a payment plan or process should be decided AT the time of contract signing, not after failure to pay.

All fees or tuition paid to the drum corps are NON-REFUNDABLE.

In addition to tuition, participation in fundraisers will be required for each member to fulfill a fundraising obligation to the drum corps' general fund on an as-needed basis. Money raised from these fundraisers does not go towards the members' tuition obligation.

Per DCI Policy 510, any performer/member may not be contracted by a DCI participating organization if outstanding debts are owed to another DCI participating organization, without written authorization agreement between both organizations. The Caballeros will contact a potential performer/member's previous DCI participating organizations to ensure that there are no financial obligations or other impediments to their participation. This policy also applies if a member owes tuition to the Caballeros from a previous season.

Housing, Meals, Transportation

Overnight housing will not be provided by the corps for local rehearsal or show weekends. There are some show weekends that will require an overnight stay where housing will be provided, including our Indianapolis trip for Championships. If a member is in need of housing, the corps can assist in finding other local members and alumni who are willing to host

overnight guests. As All-Age Drum and Bugle Corps rehearses on weekends only, we may not be able to accommodate those traveling from distances that would require weekday housing. Please reach out to us ahead of time if you are unsure if we will be able to accommodate your personal situation.

The Caballeros provide some meals throughout the season, mainly on show weekends, and while in Indianapolis. If meals will be provided we will communicate ahead of time. For winter and spring rehearsals members are generally responsible for their own meals. Any meals provided by the corps will be included in the membership tuition. If you have any questions or concerns about food service please contact foodservice@hawthornecaballeros@gmail.com

Any buses provided for parades, certain shows, and Indianapolis are included in the membership tuition. If buses are provided we will communicate ahead of time.

Member Leadership

The membership of the drum corps is led by the Head Drum Major and their team of assistant drum majors. Each individual section also has captains and section leaders who are responsible for the members in their section. These leaders are veteran members of the drum corps and have been selected by the staff as people who are responsible and capable of communicating important information with their respective sections. Members should first communicate their needs or issues with their section leader or captain. If the section leader or captain cannot assist, they will go to the drum major team. The drum majors work directly with the staff and administration to ensure that everyone is set up for success throughout the season.

As a member of the Caballeros each member will be required to join a Tour Job Crew. Each and every member has a responsibility to help with the workload of ensuring an organized and efficient rehearsal. These crews might include, but are not limited to: field lining, clean up, truck loading/unloading, prop crew, scaffolding crew, etc. There is a reasonable expectation that members will arrive early, or stay late to complete the tour job in which they have chosen. Each crew will have a veteran leader that will communicate the expectation of when and how these tour jobs should be completed.

Member Health, Wellness, & Safety

We take the health & safety of our members very seriously. We recommend that you get a sports physical prior to the spring season to ensure that you are able to endure the rigors of drum and bugle corps. We rehearse for long hours and sometimes in very high heat. You will need to be able to play and march for +/- 9 minutes straight at varying tempos when doing a full performance. Flexibility is also important as choreographed moments have become more common in show designs. We recommend a light fitness routine to get your heart rate elevated throughout the week, and a balanced diet. As we reach the warmer months it is critical that members are hydrating during the week. Due to our limited rehearsal schedule we cannot afford to have members sit out during rehearsals because they have not properly prepared their bodies ahead of time. If you have medical concerns or have questions in regards to your health, reach out to michele@hawthornecaballeros.org and we will connect you with the corps medical staff.

The Caballeros is a safe place for people of all walks of life and we continue to strive towards a happy and healthy environment for all our members. All staff, members, and volunteers over the age of 18 are required to complete a background check before participating in corps activities. In addition to background checks all members and staff will be required to complete a Participant Safety Course which covers Mandatory Reporting, Sexual Misconduct Awareness, and Emotional and Physical Misconduct Awareness. More information about DCI's Praesidium Course can be found at: <https://www.praesidiuminc.com/>.

A full copy of our member and staff safety policy can be found on our website: www.hawthornecaballeros.org under the heading Membership Safety Policies. Any and all sexual harassment complaints should be immediately reported to the personnel manager or any member of the executive team. If you are uncomfortable making the report in person or the complaint is on behalf of something you witnessed, a "Whistleblowers Form" is available at www.hawthornecaballeros.org. Reports can be made anonymously.

Media Policy

Any member of the Hawthorne Caballeros is to get prior approval to appear on Social Media, Media, or other video, print or audio platforms unless the appearance is with the DCI media group or Caballeros media team. This approval can be done by submitting the Media Approval Form found on the corps website. The Executive Administration will review and respond within one week during the regular season, and within two weeks during preseason.

All members are reminded that the Executive Administrators are the only people authorized to speak on behalf of the Drum Corps. In most cases, that would defer to the General Manager or their designee.

The policy is meant to ensure that the proper message is sent and that information is released to correspond with our marketing team. We also want to make sure that members don't unknowingly release proprietary information to other competing corps.

From the DCI Media Relations Policy 125, remember that in responding to the media, the interview subject can be viewed as representing and speaking for the entire participating organization or even for the DCI community. Individual opinions should be clearly and carefully identified as such. Please be aware that your own social media, public or private, can have an impact on our organization and/or DCI. Failure to adhere to our Media Policy can result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal from the organization.

Operational Guidelines

The Hawthorne Caballeros are excited to have become a member of the Drum Corps International (DCI) All-Age Division, and as such we will be participating and competing in the DCI circuit during the 2026 season including two championship performances at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis, Indiana. The Caballeros are required to adhere to all policies and procedures set forth by DCI. More information about DCI policies, procedures, and by-laws can be found on their website www.dci.org/static/bylaws-policies-procedures

Parent Participation

Many hands make light work, and as such we are always looking for volunteers. Parents are always welcome to help out as much or as little as you would like. We are always looking for help in many areas including but not limited to: truck drivers, meals, uniforms, moving equipment, constructing props, and getting the corps on and off the field. There are some opportunities to volunteer hours in exchange for a reduction in your child's tuition. These opportunities can be discussed with the Business Manager, Operations Manager, or General Manager.

Who Can I Contact?

Executive Committee

General Manager - Alan Katz

gm@hawthornecaballeros.org

Operations Manager - Blaise Castaldo

operations@hawthornecaballeros.org

Business Manager - David Marks

business@hawthornecaballeros.org

Personnel Manager - Michele Parrino

michele@hawthornecaballeros.org

Treasurer - Stephen Girard

finances@hawthornecaballeros.org

Secretary/Head Drum Major - Kim Roman

kimroman@hawthornecaballeros.org

Administrative Team

Recruitment/Facilities Coordinator - Josh Katz

facilities@hawthornecaballeros.org

Website & Social Media Coordinator - Kim Murphy

media@hawthornecaballeros.org

Food Service and Volunteer Coordinator - Jennifer Mongahan

foodservice@hawthornecaballeros.org

General Inquiries - info@hawthornecaballeros.org

Caballeros 2026 Schedule *SUBJECT TO CHANGE*			
Date	Location	Estimated Timing	Event
November 29, 2025	PCTI	9:00 am - 6:00 pm	Open House
November 30, 2025	PCTI	9:00 am - 4:00 pm	Open House
December 20, 2025	Ramsey, NJ	9:00 am - 6:00 pm	Winter Camp, Percussion & Brass Auditions
December 21, 2025	Ramsey, NJ	9:00 am - 4:00 pm	Winter Camp, Percussion & Brass Auditions
January 17, 2026	TBD North Jersey	9:00 am - 6:00 pm	Winter Camp, Percussion & Brass Auditions
January 18, 2026	TBD North Jersey	9:00 am - 4:00 pm	Winter Camp, Percussion & Brass Auditions
February 7, 2026	TBD North Jersey	9:00 am - 6:00 pm	Saturday Only
February 28, 2026	TBD North Jersey	9:00 am - 6:00 pm	Winter Camp, Percussion & Brass Auditions
March 1, 2026	TBD North Jersey	9:00 am - 4:00 pm	Winter Camp, Percussion & Brass Auditions
March 14, 2026	TBD North Jersey	parade report 9:00 am rehearsal to follow	Morristown St. Patrick's Day Parade & Rehearsal
March 15, 2026	TBD North Jersey	9:00 am - 4:00 pm	Rehearsal
April 11, 2026	Hawthorne, NJ	9:00 am - 9:00 pm	Outdoor Drill Rehearsal
April 12, 2026	Hawthorne, NJ	9:00 am - 4:00 pm	Outdoor Drill Rehearsal
April 25, 2026	Hawthorne, NJ	9:00 am - 9:00 pm	Outdoor Drill Rehearsal Color Guard Auditions
April 26, 2026	Hawthorne, NJ	9:00 am - 4:00 pm	Outdoor Drill Rehearsal Color Guard Auditions

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Caballeros 2026 Schedule
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Date	Location	Estimated Timing	Event
May 1, 2026	Hawthorne, NJ	7:00 pm - 10:00 pm	Sectional Rehearsal
May 2, 2026	Hawthorne, NJ	9:00 am - 9:00 pm	Camp Weekend
May 3, 2026	Hawthorne, NJ	9:00 am - 4:00 pm	Camp Weekend
May 8, 2026	Hawthorne, NJ	7:00 pm - 10:00 pm	Sectional Rehearsal
May 9, 2026	Hawthorne, NJ	9:00 am - 9:00 pm	Camp Weekend
May 10, 2025	Hawthorne, NJ	9:00 am - 1:00 pm	Half Day Rehearsal
May 15, 2026	Hawthorne, NJ	7:00 pm - 10:00 pm	Sectional Rehearsal
May 16, 2026	Hawthorne, NJ	9:00 am - 9:00 pm	Full Corps Rehearsal
May 17, 2026	Hawthorne, NJ	9:00 am - 4:00 pm	Full Corps Rehearsal
May 22, 2026	Hawthorne, NJ	7:00 pm - 10:00 pm	Sectional Rehearsal
May 23, 2026	Hawthorne, NJ	8:30 am - 5:30 pm History Night 7:00 pm	Full Corps Rehearsal & History Night
May 24, 2026	Hawthorne, NJ	parade report 11:00 am Rehearsal 4:00 pm - 8:00 pm	Saddle Brook Memorial Day Parade & Rehearsal
May 25, 2026	Hawthorne, NJ	parade report 8:30am	Fair Lawn & Hawthorne Memorial Day Parades
May 29, 2026	Hawthorne, NJ	7:00 pm - 10:00 pm	Sectional Rehearsal
May 30, 2026	Hawthorne, NJ	9:00 am - 9:00 pm	Full Corps Rehearsal
May 31, 2026	Hawthorne, NJ	9:00 am - 4:00 pm	Full Corps Rehearsal

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Caballeros 2026 Schedule *SUBJECT TO CHANGE*			
Date	Location	Estimated Timing	Event
June 5, 2026	TBD North Jersey	7:00 pm - 10:00 pm	Full Ensemble Rehearsal
June 6, 20226	TBD North Jersey	9:00 am - 9:00 pm	Camp Weekend
June 7, 2026	TBD North Jersey	9:00 am - 4:00 pm	Camp Weekend
June 12, 2026	TBD North Jersey	7:00 pm - 10:00 pm	Full Ensemble Rehearsal
June 13, 2026	Hopatcong, NJ	Full Day	Hopatcong Flag Day Parade & Camp Weekend
June 14, 2026	TBD North Jersey	9:00 am - 4:00 pm	Camp Weekend
June 19, 2026	TBD North Jersey	7:00 pm - 10:00 pm	Full Ensemble Rehearsal
June 20, 2026	TBD North Jersey	9:00 am - 9:00 pm	Camp Weekend
June 21, 2025	TBD North Jersey	9:00 am - 1:00 pm	Half Day Rehearsal
June 26, 2026	TBD North Jersey	7:00 pm - 10:00 pm	Full Ensemble Rehearsal
June 27, 2026	Shelton, CT	Full Day	Rehearsal & Barnum Festival Contest *no bus
June 28, 2026	Bridgeport, CT	AM Report, finished approx 2:00pm	Barnum Parade *overnight housing provided
July 3, 2026	TBD North Jersey	9:00 am - 9:00 pm	Full Ensemble Rehearsal (FULL DAY)
July 4, 2026	TBD North Jersey	parade report 7:00 am rehearsal to follow	Parades Oradell, NJ & Ridgefield Park, NJ Full Ensemble Rehearsal
July 5, 2026	TBD North Jersey	9:00 am - 4:00 pm	Full Ensemble Rehearsal

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Caballeros 2026 Schedule
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Date	Location	Estimated Timing	Event
July 10, 2026	TBD North Jersey	7:00 pm - 10:00 pm	Full Ensemble Rehearsal
July 11, 2026	Clifton, NJ	Full Day	Drum Corps Grand Prix
July 12, 2026	TBD North Jersey	9:00 am - 4:00 pm	Full Ensemble Rehearsal
July 17, 2026	TBD North Jersey	7:00 pm - 10:00 pm	Full Ensemble Rehearsal
July 18, 2026	TBD North Jersey	9:00 am - 9:00 pm	Rehearsal Weekend
July 19, 2026	TBD North Jersey	9:00 am - 4:00 pm	Full Ensemble Rehearsal
July 24, 2026	TBD North Jersey	7:00 pm - 10:00 pm	Full Ensemble Rehearsal
July 25, 2026	Mount Olive, NJ	Full Day	Rehearsal & Mount Olive Contest
July 26, 2026	TBD North Jersey	9:00 am - 4:00 pm	Full Ensemble Rehearsal
July 31, 2026	TBD Pennsylvania	bus departs @ 5:30am	Full Ensemble Rehearsal *bus provided, housing provided
August 1, 2026	TBD Pennsylvania	Full Day	Rehearsal & TBD PA Contest
August 2, 2026	Downingtown, PA	Full Day *approx. return home midnight	Rehearsal & Downingtown Contest
August 3, 2026	PCTI	9:00 am - 6:00 pm	TBD OFF OR REHEARSAL
August 4, 2026	PCTI	9:00 am - 6:00 pm	TBD OFF OR REHEARSAL
August 5, 2026	PCTI	Bus leaves AM	Departure for Indy
August 6, 2026	Indianapolis, IN	FULL DAY	Championships Rehearsal
August 7, 2026	Indianapolis, IN	FULL DAY	Championships Rehearsal
August 8, 2026	Indianapolis, IN	FULL DAY	Championships