

ive Director Cindy Maupin said. "We're going to be doing great."

"We file claims so that (veterans) get benefits," Commission Member Robert Wallace said. "Those are things you can't do easily on your own. So if you come in and say 'I have a hearing loss' and we get you so much money for that claim."

Wallace said the commission office has seen \$600,000 in new claims approved in 2019.

"For 2019, we brought in over \$1 million," Maupin said, adding this included back-pay for veterans. "In December, we had a huge jump."

The staff maintains an office in Bellaire five days a week, and an office in Barnesville open Tuesdays and Thursdays.

The commission also has a satellite office at the VA Clinic at Ohio Valley Mall.

She said transportation is another valued service.

"We have two full-time vans," she said, adding that, in total, 740,586 miles were driven last year. The vans transported 1,653 veterans to Pittsburgh.

The staff can be reached at 740-325-1042.

erty taxes collected, he said.

"With the oil and gas boom, it's allowed a little more money to come in to the veterans office," he said.

The veterans office was able to hire two new service officers in Thompson's stead. He completed his last day of work shortly after Christmas on Dec 27.

Thompson said he is still "soaking in" his retirement, but his work around the county will not cease.

"I'm involved in the community and things going on in the county. I'm sure I'll always stay busy with that," he said.

UL Band gives New Year's surprise

By ROBERT DEFRANK
Times Leader Staff Writer

BELMONT — Union Local School District band members and band boosters delivered food and happy New Years wishes to families in the district on New Year's Day.

"The band boosters put the project together, called March it Forward," band director April Linard said. "It was kind of similar to Paying it Forward, with 'it' being the band. It was a chance for us to collect donations to provide meals to people or families in our community who may need a hot meal on New Year's Day.

"A lot of people focus on providing meals over Thanksgiving and Christmas, but there isn't a lot of focus on the New Year, and so we decided to put together this project to focus on New Year's Day. The boosters, the students and the parents went out, seeking donations from their families, from local businesses, from school employees," she said.

In addition, Linard said they collected names and addresses of people in the school district communities who would appreciate a New Year's gift.

"Our goal was to deliver 300 meals, and I know we came close to that. We did not reach that goal, but we did come close," she said.



Photo Provided

MEMBERS OF the Union Local marching band give back to the community on New Year's Day by delivering hot meals to community members and families. They delivered nearly 300 meals. Pictured are, front, David Noble, Ella Chambers, Andrew Coleman, Heidi Hull, Mollie Hamilton. Middle, from left, Julia Williams, Kimmy Dallas, Nicole Puperi, Amy Hissrich. Back, from left, Carson Phillips, Brody Rom'n, Emma Compher, Sarah Bonnett

"The band boosters were the members who were organizing and preparing the food and getting the names. Our marching band members were the kids who were delivering the meals, along with their parents, to the community members on New Year's Day."

Linard said the project

also raised money for the band's percussion equipment.

In prior Union Local board of education meetings, administrators and educators said the district also focused on encouraging community outreach and a culture of compassion.

"I received a text message

from one of my students while they were delivering the meals," Linard said, and shared the message from Madelyn Winland, a junior.

"They were so kind and appreciative. They were so happy. It was so much fun. I loved seeing so many happy and grateful people," the text read.