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Wiley College choir to perform at White House

By medcadmin

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The White House will ring in this year's holiday season with 37 Christmas trees, life-size ginger bread homes and hand-selected performers including those from one of Marshall's own institutions.

The Wiley College A Cappella Choir has been selected out of thousands of hopeful participants to put on a special concert for members of the White House staff, which may include the President of the United States.

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“The social office of the White House makes the determination who will be invited to perform,” Wiley College Director of Choral Music Stephen Hayes said. “And as they said, they had thousands of requests to sing at the white house, and they selected our choir.”

Hayes said thousands of “Americana” type performing groups apply to perform at the White House during the holiday season, but only a handful actually get chosen.

“How it works is that the president invites special guests to the White House this month and the whole purpose is to see the Christmas decorations and to view the spirit of Christmas from our national point of view,” Hayes said. “And during these times while visiting they will have a select small group providing entertainment.”

He said it was one of the choir students, Daryl Joy Walters, who was the reason behind the choir being approved to perform.

“She got most of it approved through the president’s Historically Black College/University initiative,” he said. “Next thing you know they called and said we were in consideration and about a week after we were accepted.”

Eighteen members of the choir, including Wiley College President Haywood L. Strickland, departed on Tuesday evening and arrived in Washington D.C. Wednesday evening.

Hayes said the choir is set to perform Friday, and because of high security, will not know what time they perform until they are delivered that day.

“The high security also kept us from being able to publicize the invitation until just a few days ago, and also from bringing our entire choir,” he added.

Hayes said the choir will put on a special performance of Christmas music which include both classical and contemporary melodies.

Hayes said he could not say exactly why they chose the Wiley College A Cappella Choir, but did know that being selected is “a very special opportunity for our students.”

I have tried to share this as a great opportunity to connect with the American spirit on the national level, and the role each should consider as American citizens,” Hayes said. “I am hoping that is what the experience will mean to students....a greater connection to the American spirit.”

He added this invitation is not only exceptional for Wiley College, but for the people of East Texas and more specifically, the Marshall area.

“We have a lot of great things going on in Marshall,” he said.“And it makes you feel very proud, that we are adding to the beauty of this town and what it is about.”