

Band to welcome soldiers home

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It's not just friends and family members who are happy to see the soldiers of the 495th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion return home today — community members are getting in on the act with a performance by the Flathead Valley Community Band.

"Their returning home is a big, big deal to them and their family members," said BJ Lupton, who is helping organize the event. "We want to make it as special as we can and honor and thank them for their service."

Scheduled to fly into Glacier Park International Airport today at 1:30 p.m., 495th members are returning from a nine-month deployment to Afghanistan where they provided logistics and support in the southern region of that country.

"We're hoping to welcome them home with some music when they get off the plane," band director Allen Slater said. "We know the troops are coming in and being a civic-minded group like we are, we wanted to take part in it."

Slater said the band will be on hand about a half hour before the soldiers are expected to arrive and will perform a "collection of marches and patriotic tunes."

"We can't have the full band there, because this came up so soon and people have prior commitments," Slater said. "But we've had a really good response, and those who can't be on hand are disappointed that they can't. We're really supportive of our men and women who protect our country."

According to Maj. Tim Crowe, chief of public affairs for the Montana Army National Guard, the soldiers will be met by their families and community members at the airport before traveling to the drill hall, where they will be released to spend time with their family members.