



DERRIERE DEFENSE these dads do eventually get up and fall in line for some top-notch lawn chair handling.

Atten-chair!

These dads may enjoy things like hanging out in their underwear—but when they step into military formation, they swing a mean lawn chair for charity.

By Leah Pietrusiak

Instead of dropping down and doing 20, these soldiers are trying not to drop their drawers—or chairs.

The Precision Lawn Chair Marching Dads have been appearing in parades and community events for almost 14 years. Marching in military formation, armed with lawn chairs instead of guns, they bark out things like: “She don’t know and I don’t care / I’m wearing yesterday’s underwear.”

Why? Because it’s funny, and people like it. And because the troupe gives all the money it raises to charity. At the city’s Thanksgiving Parade on Thursday 23, the dads will march for the second year in their undershirts, boxers and long johns and twirl lawn chairs to raise money for the Bear Necessities Pediatric Cancer Foundation, which is similar in nature to the Make-a-Wish Foundation.

“It’s a bunch of friends of mine we are entertainment to end the dull parade norm” says drill sergeant Kent Welch, who took the reins of this family-friendly spectacle—which originated in suburban Crystal Lake—four years ago. The soldiers usually bring their kids to their performances, where they pass out candy to children in the crowd. Word is the city doesn’t allow the candy to be passed out at parades, but we suspect the dads’ offspring won’t mind sitting this one out: At last year’s Thanksgiving Day Parade, the wind chill was 19 degrees below zero.

“We had on four pairs of long underwear—including red long underwear with the flap in the butt—ten pairs of socks...it looked like we had club feet!” Welch recalls. “And the wind still cut through, so we’re hoping for better weather this year.”

If you don’t hear some of their cadences—like the staple “Don’t get caught with your boxers down...Company, hike ‘em up!” (“We pull them up to our waist or over the top of our guts; it’s pretty funny,” Welch says)—don’t worry, their lips aren’t frozen, the Chicago parade is just too loud, according to the sergeant.

Cold weather isn’t the only challenge: The dads have had their fair share of lawn-chair casualties as well. “We go through those chairs like crazy,” Welch says. “One time somebody swung it around and sat down on it and it blew out and [he] landed on the ground... *Lawn-chair malfunction* is an understatement.”

After the parade, the guys sit down to turkey (not in their chairs though), and not just in their boxers, either. “No, I go into normal clothes when I get home,” Welch says, “which is a Chicago Bears jersey.”

The Precision Lawn Chair Marching Dads perform at the McDonald’s Thanksgiving Day Parade on Thursday 23. See Around Town. See a live video at www.lawnchairdads.com.

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