

Local News



Joe Larese/The Journal News

Samantha Wesley of the Port Chester High School Marching Band plays baritone Thursday during the topping-off ceremony for the Maria Fareri Children's Hospital under construction at Westchester Medical Center in Valhalla.

\$25,000 away from Miami

Port Chester band still short of \$100G needed for trip

Hema Easley
The Journal News

PORT CHESTER — Dressed in spectacular red and black uniforms, the 119-member Port Chester High School Marching Band marched flawlessly while playing "The Star Spangled Banner" in front of hundreds of spectators at Thursday's topping-off ceremony for Westchester Medical Center's Maria Fareri Children's Hospital in Valhalla.

The military precision came from the nearly 400 hours of practice band members have put in so far for the grand finale on

How to help

The Port Chester High School Marching Band Association is sponsoring several fund-raisers to help the band get to the Orange Bowl. They include:

- Sales of oranges or grapefruits, \$12 per case.
- Trip "miles" sponsorships at \$10 a mile.
- Band meal sponsorships by companies, at \$1,200 per meal, during the four-day trip.

To place orders, make donations or for further inquiries, call Maryann Giorgi, Port Chester High School Marching Band Association treasurer, at 914-937-9192 or e-mail fruit@portchesterhighschoolband.org.

Jan 2: performing in front of thousands of spectators during the Orange Bowl in Miami. The Port Chester band is the only one from the Northeast picked to play at the football extravaganza, an honor the young musicians say they have worked

hard to achieve.

But the students don't have enough money yet to make the trip.

"We stand about \$25,000 short of our goal. It will be a shame if it doesn't happen," said Len Savanella, whose twin

daughters play in the band and who handles its publicity.

Students must raise the \$100,000 that the trip to Miami is likely to cost. Though the school pays for the band's uniforms and musical instruments, the students must arrange for funds to pay for airfare and their boarding and lodging expenses. The band members and their families have been raising money for the trip for two years.

"I will be really disappointed if we don't go after the long practice and hard work," said Samantha Davis, 17, who plays a xylophone in the "pit," the non-marching section of the band that leads the music. Samantha said she was practically married to the band and had set aside hobbies and work to make time

Please see BAND, 2B

Marching band still needs funds for trip

BAND, from 1B

for the long hours of practice.

On average, band members practice three hours every Tuesday and Thursday, and longer hours on weekends. They also take part in competitions in the tri-state area and use invitations to play at events such as Thursday's hospital ceremony to hone their skills.

Proud to have their children involved in the 70-year-old band, which is recognized for its excellence, parents participate in the Port Chester High School Marching Band Association and have pitched in with their time and fund-raising efforts.

They say that in these times, when school publicity has been dominated by tales of excess and violence, such efforts must be encouraged.

"We are making appeals to local civic organizations. We are trying to find some angels," Savanella said.

The band has launched a large fund-raising drive, with members and parents selling advertisements and fruit to collect money for the Miami trip. Community members have been asked to sponsor anything from one meal to a room in Miami or even a mile of the trip. Jars for donations are out on counters in grocery stores.

Some Port Chester residents have sponsored the band to play at nursing homes in the area to help the musicians raise money.

A month ago, the band raised \$8,000 during a homecoming competition in which 12 bands from the tri-state area participated.

"Ours is not an affluent community that can help (the band) financially," said Martha Cruz, a band mother, who had come to watch Thursday's performance. "But they support it in other ways."

In between performances Thursday, students discussed the financial difficulty.

"Everyone will be hugely disappointed," if they are unable to go, said senior Jennifer Pace, 17, who leads the percussion section and has twin brothers in the band. "We're a little short, but we're trying pretty hard. And we have the orange sales coming up."

The Port Chester band's annual orange sales have traditionally raised a sizable amount of money. Band members hope they can match the \$11,000 they raised from orange sales last year.

The orange sales begin on Columbus Day weekend. Buyers place their orders for oranges and grapefruits in advance, and the fruits arrive in the first week of December. Band members then deliver the oranges door to door.

"Usually, people buy a lot of oranges," Davis said. "We are counting on that."

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