



The Journal News
Subscribe | Advertise

Lau

Port Chester High School band is Bermuda-bound

By **ALISON BERT**
abert@thejournalnews.com
 THE JOURNAL NEWS
 (Original publication: March 21, 2005)

The Pride of Port Chester will perform in Bermuda this spring, invited to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the island's discovery.

The 120-member marching band of Port Chester High School has played various high-profile venues over the years, including the Orange Bowl in Miami and the Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade and the St. Patrick's Day parade in New York City, and it appeared in the 1994 remake of "Miracle on 34th Street." But this year, fund-raising didn't quite pan out for a spring appearance at Disney World in Orlando.

"A lot of students were kind of bummed out because we didn't have a trip," said band president Randy Lesko, 17, who plays saxophone.

Their spirits were lifted when they learned they were heading to the British territory May 20 to 24, with most expenses paid by the host government.

"I happen to think it's a lot better," Lesko said. "Bermuda's such a great place — I mean, it's a trip outside the country."

For him and some of his bandmates, it will be their first experience traveling abroad.

Few members have been to Bermuda. Freshman xylophone player Jessica Westerman, who visited the island with her family in second grade, told them what they could expect: "The sand is really pink, the water is clear and the houses are really colorful."

About Bermuda

History: Bermuda is believed to have been discovered accidentally in 1505 by Juan de Bermudez, captain of a Spanish vessel. The island remained uninhabited until 1609, when it was settled by shipwrecked English colonists.

Location: Group of islands in North Atlantic Ocean east of South Carolina.

Area: 33 square miles, one-third the size of Washington, D.C.

Climate: Subtropical.

Government: Parliamentary British territory with internal self-government. A proposition for independence was soundly defeated in 1995.

Population: 64,935 (2004)

Ethnic groups: 58 percent black, 36 percent white, 6 percent other.

Languages: English (official), Portuguese.

Economy: Based on providing financial services for international businesses and luxury facilities for tourists.

Sources: The World Factbook:
www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/bd.html;
www.bermuda-online.org



Some students, like freshman Katie Marino, said they looked forward to the camaraderie of traveling with bandmates and the chance to play for 15,000 people.

In a rehearsal this month, Marino and fellow color guard members spun flags and sabers as band members rapped drums with crisp, sure rhythms and pointed horns to a horizon not visible inside the school auditorium. Marching in place, they played a rousing rendition of a century-old British march called "Mechanized Infantry." Band director Robert Vitti referred to its composer, bandmaster David McBain, as "the John Philip Sousa of England."

In Bermuda, the band will play the march as part of a tribute to British composers, interspersed with American classics such as "Stars and Stripes." Their uniforms, replicas of the Royal British Marines', also pay homage to the British.

Vitti said that despite the island's British heritage, however, the style of his band was distinct from that of Bermudan marching bands. Port Chester takes a "drum and bugle corps approach ... augmented by intricate marching and maneuvering," Vitti said, while Bermudan bands take more of a "concert approach." The Port Chester band will give clinics at Bermuda high schools as part of a musical exchange.

For junior Chris Romero, 16, who has played drums since fourth grade, something else sets his band apart — the crisp, distinctive rhythmic cadence his drum line plays between numbers.

"When they hear Port Chester play the 'street beat,' " he said, "they know who's coming down the street. Everyone knows Port Chester."

[TOP OF PAGE](#) | [PRINTER-FRIENDLY FORMAT](#) | [E-MAIL THIS ARTICLE](#)



Copyright 2005 The Journal News, a Gannett Co. Inc. newspaper serving Westchester, Rockland and Putnam Counties in New York. Use of this site signifies your agreement to the [Terms of Service](#) and [Privacy Policy](#), updated June 7, 2005.

[USA Today](#) • [USA Weekend](#) • [Gannett Co. Inc.](#) • [Gannett Foundation](#)