

PORT CHESTER Westmore NEWS

School construction
projects now in the
hands
page 8

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The Port Chester High School Band performs at Giants Stadium for the USSBA Championships in November 2004.

Sounds and sunblock

By Mike Delano

This year, like every year, music will be playing and colors waving as members of the Port Chester High School Band perform the routines they've honed to a tee since the fall, but with one difference. This spring, they'll be performing those routines in Bermuda.

All 103 members of the band and color guard have been invited by the Bermuda National Education Council (BNEC) to perform at two musical events on the island in May. The trip runs from May 20 through May 24.

On May 21, the band will participate in a festival at the Bermuda National Sports Centre, joined by Howard University's Marching

band will march in the annual "Bermuda Day" parade.

The BNEC, a youth development organization, represents several educational associations on the island and has organized musical programs in the past, such as a Youth Jazz Ensemble and the Bermuda Middle School Orchestra.

Port Chester High School Band chosen to play in Bermuda

"We believe that this visit could provide both your students and our Bermudian youth with the exposure and opportunities to gain an appreciation for similarities and differences between cultures," Melvyn Bassett, the BNEC chairman, wrote in his Feb. 3 invitation letter. He added that he hopes the visit will encourage the formation of marching bands at the local high schools, none of which currently have them.

Outside of the performances, the Bermudian Ministries of Culture, Youth, Sport and Tourism will organize activities around the island for the students, who will also be able to interact with other high school students and musicians. The marching band from Brown University and one from a high school in Fredericksburg, Va. were also invited, according to Domenic Carriero, president of the Port Chester High School Band Association.

The BNEC will cover all of the island costs for the trip, including transportation, meals and accommodation. Students will stay at the Bermuda Regiment Barracks.

The organization also donated \$10,000 toward travel costs, the remainder of which, estimated between \$15,000 and \$20,000, will be covered by the PCHS Band Association, using revenues from its various fundraising efforts during the year.

"It sounds like such a great opportunity," Port Chester Board of Education member Anne Capucci said. "We're hoping every child will have a chance to go."

Band Director Robert Vitti still isn't quite sure how Port Chester was chosen by the BNEC, but he guesses that the band's high-profile appearances at the Orange Bowl and the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade in previous years and their British-style uniforms had something to do with it. Bermuda is a British colony.

"They got my name through someplace in (New York City)," Vitti said. "They were looking for a New York band. It's an honor for them to ask us."

Outside of personal fundraising by each of the band members, additional travel revenue will be generated from several large band association events that are coming up, such as a flower sale and car wash, and the annual dinner dance in April.

"It's a unique and wonderful opportunity for the kids," said Maryann Giorgi, treasurer of the band association. "The community was wonderful when we went to the Orange Bowl and hopefully they'll be just as wonderful."

Other than travels to Canada, this is the first time the band will have traveled outside the country. It will perform its regular field show at the two events, which is British-composer-themed and includes John Rutter's "Gloria," his version of "A Lad from Kyle" and William Walton's "Crown Imperial."

"Music is universal, but they'll learn how different the world is,"

Please turn to page 11

Sounds and sunblock

Continued from page 1

Carriero said of the trip. "They'll see how the students on the island live and learn and they'll be able to pick up a lot of different instruments, different flavors."

PCHS senior Randy Lesko, the band president, is looking forward to spending some time on the beach in between performances.

"Every band trip is always a great experience," he said. "We always take something back with us."

He also hopes the band is able to give something back and inspire the young musicians on the island to start their own bands.

"I hope we can bring them a foundation," he said. "And we can get a better picture of what music is."

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