

P.C. welcomes two alums home

Two village natives judge at NYSSMA music festival

By Sabrina Banes

Port Chester Middle School's gymnasium echoed with the cacophonous sound of 30 instruments playing 30 different songs Saturday afternoon, as students practiced for their New York State School Music Association auditions.

Meanwhile, 1973 Port Chester High School graduate Paul Scatenato returned to the middle school building for the first time in many years. Once a student in the building, the voice teacher returned to Port Chester to adjudicate at the NYSSMA festival.

"I had never been assigned here before," said Scatenato, who now lives in Kingston, N.Y. and has been judging NYSSMA auditions since 1990. "I've been very, very impressed."

festival last Friday and Saturday for the third time in seven years.

"Theoretically, we're supposed to do it once every 11 years," Kraut said. But he has volunteered to host the festival more frequently because he enjoys it, he added. "It's such a fun event. It's an important event, too."

But it is also a huge event to organize, with approximately 1,800 students from 4th through 12th grades auditioning and 34 judges, some of whom came from as far away as Potsdam. Fortunately, Kraut had the assistance of his 25-year-old daughter, Kerri, as well as a team of 100 student and 35 parent volunteers.

Marianne Lepre-Nolan, a high school classmate of Kraut's and a judge at the festival, said the event was perfectly executed.



Flutist Tessa Kajdi, left, bass clarinetist Blythe Duckett, clarinetist Rachel Lumish and saxophonist Amanda Saxe from Blind Brook Middle School take a few moments to laugh while they practice for their NYSSMA ensemble audition this past Saturday at Port Chester Middle School.

Scatenato was referring to the organizational skills of his classmate, Ken Kraut, who now chairs the music department for the Port Chester schools. Kraut hosted the



NYSSMA adjudicator Marianne Lepre-Nolan and Port Chester High School senior Veronica Tornini play scales during their lunch break, with Lepre-Nolan on piccolo and Tornini on flute.

was perfectly executed.

"Ken is in the top one percent of people who run festivals," said Lepre-Nolan, who now lives in Somers. "He is extremely well organized, and he builds coalitions

with his people. You only get that by being really good at what you do."

Lepre-Nolan was in the Port Chester High School Band with Kraut and has kept in touch with both him and their band director, town legend Ken Force, throughout the years. It was because of Force that she became a band director herself.

"He was the best teacher I ever had, the most inspirational teacher I ever had," she said. He taught her that "it's not just about notes, it's not just about rhythms, it's about music," she added.

Lepre-Nolan only taught music in a school system for three years, but she still offers private flute lessons and performs professionally. On Saturday, she was giving Port Chester High

School senior Veronica Tornini tips on how to give music lessons. Mole skin stuck to specific places



PCHS classmates Ken Kraut and Paul Scatenato reunited for the first time since 1973 when Scatenato adjudicated at the NYSSMA festival Kraut organized at Port Chester Middle School.

on an instrument will help a young musician learn how to hold the

instrument properly, while a dab of nail polish on each joint of the instrument will help students see how the pieces should line up, she advised.

While Lepre-Nolan was happy to meet this generation of Port Chester students and especially enjoyed judging from the room where she once took math classes, she said her focus at the festival was to be fair to all students who auditioned.

This was good news for students like Amanda Owens, an eighth grader from Rye who has been participating in NYSSMA festivals since she was in fourth grade. Owens said she wasn't nervous about her audition so much as excited.

"It's fun after you work hard all year to see how it pays off," Owens said.