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## Port Chester district's Band Night celebrates 'spirit of a community'

BY CHELSEA MITAMURA • [CMITAMURA@LOHUD.COM](mailto:CMITAMURA@LOHUD.COM) • JUNE 11, 2009

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PORT CHESTER - Performances by the elementary and middle school bands - as well as the "Pride of Port Chester," the high school band - were followed yesterday by a band composed of alumni from as early as the class of 1942 as the school district marked its 65th annual Band Night.



Port Chester High School hosts the district's 65th annual Band Night yesterday, which featured alumni and student bands marching across the high school's Ryan Field. (Photos by Frank Becerra Jr/The Journal News)

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"It's a showcase for the public eye to see our education process, to see levels of change from elementary through middle and high school," said high school Band Director Robert Vitti, who has worked at the school since 1979.

Alumni and student bands marched across the high school's Ryan Field, playing such pieces as "National Emblem," "Stand Up and Cheer" and "God Bless America."

"When we were young there was still no competition, but all the kids wanted to know who won," said Salvatore Sabia, class of 1950, who started playing trumpet in third grade, graduated from high school as band president, and stayed involved throughout his children's education.

"It's an event unique to Port Chester; the entire town used to show up," said Capt. Ken Force of the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy, a former high school band director.

While Band Night is not competitive, the high school band has won a number of awards since its founding in 1932 and has been featured at a number of notable events, including a scene in "Spiderman 3," numerous Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parades, and a celebration marking Bermuda's 500th anniversary. It's the only U.S. high school band to play during a Ringling Bros. Circus.

"When I saw the U.S. Army and Royal Marines march in England I thought, 'I have to do this in America,'" said Force, who introduced British-style marching to Port Chester in 1968. "And when people saw us, they were flabbergasted. We (were) marching like those in front of Buckingham Palace."

The high school band, originally a concert band, is one of a few bands in the country to use the British marching technique and wear traditional British attire, including pith helmets the school must have especially made.



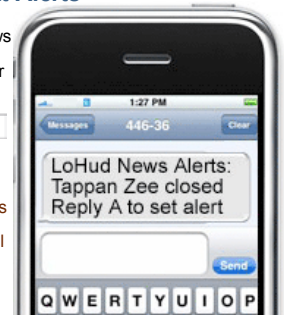
Nino Pallotti, from the Port Chester High School Class of 1942, plays the saxophone.

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