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October 24, 2008  
Edition (rss)

## Scheduling conflict kept band from one home football game

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I would like to comment on a recent letter to the editor entitled "PCHS Band could help bring back school spirit."

To begin, I thank the writer for recognizing the dedication and work ethic of our students and families involved with the Port Chester High School Marching Band. Everything stated in this regard is so true, appropriate and well-deserved. What could be added are the unceasing efforts of the teachers and staff who bring the idea of a band program to reality and who continue the tradition of excellence started in the 1930s by Paul Weckesser.

Most of the letter is concerned with raising the level of school spirit and bringing back pride and a sense of community. These are all very worthy ideals, and I hope everyone would welcome additional efforts on the part of the community, parent-teacher-student organizations and school administration to continue to target this perceived deficiency and propose further remedies. One such solution was initiated last year under the guidance of PCHS Principal Dr. Mitchell Combs, who developed the idea of an all-inclusive fall sports pep rally, held during the school day, at which the band (and the cheerleaders) do indeed act as "the main rallying cry for school spirit and pride" and "showcase their talents and ability in front of their peers and the student body" as the writer proposes.

The premise of the remainder of the letter is based on incorrect information— that the PCHS Band does not attend home football games. This is a generalization and over-simplification that is completely untrue for the vast majority of home games. Anyone who has attended a home game other than Oct. 4, 2008 knows the truth.

Prior to the homecoming game last Friday, Oct. 17, at which the band performed the National Anthem, spirit music and their half-time show, there were two other home games so far this season. The band performed as described above at one of these but did not attend the other due to the abnormally late start of the game following SAT testing, which created a conflict with another scheduled band activity. Last season, the band missed a single home football game when a District decision was made to honor the Port Chester volunteer firemen's request to have the band lead their historic anniversary parade in support of our firemen and the community.

Band families know all about the typical schedule on the day of a home football game: band practice at 9:00 a.m., lunch break, home football game, afternoon band practice, depart for competition and return home late in the evening. The band members' level of commitment is such that they routinely spend entire Saturdays and often most of Sundays involved in school-related activities during the fall season

The writer states that the primary purpose of the marching band is to be part of school activities. This point is arguable, especially when one examines the written history of the Port Chester Music program. However, in the present day, marching bands (and cheerleading programs as well) have transcended their football-related roots and have become competitive sports in their own right. Competitive marching band is a rewarding, inclusive, spirited, family-oriented school-sponsored activity that generates a great deal of school and community pride, and it would take a whole lot more space than I would be allowed here to describe the complexities of preparation, rehearsal, logistics and scheduling involved in an active program such as ours.



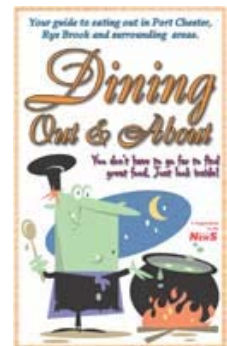
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But this program does not supplant participation in home football games or other school activities, and it is unfair to cite the occasion of an unfortunate scheduling conflict as indicative of an overall lack of effort on the part of the band in promoting school spirit.

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