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## East Ramapo Marching Band hosts competition in Spring Valley

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**SPECIAL TO THE JOURNAL NEWS**

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The thundering sounds of drum lines filled the air at the Ramapo High School football field yesterday, where the East Ramapo Marching Band hosted its fourth annual U.S. Scholastic Band Association competition.

Eight bands, ranging in size from 40 to more than 150 members, came from as far away as Long Island to compete.

Suffern High School marching band placed second in Class II and received a trophy. The Port Chester High School marching band, the only Class V band to participate in the competition, won best in color guard, percussion, visual, music and effect.

"We're called the Pride of Port Chester," said Jose Bautista, a senior at Port Chester High School and co-president of the marching band.

Holding their trophy, the Port Chester band leaders explained that preparation begins in Band Camp, where all the members work intensely for two weeks before school starts and grow close.

"We consider ourselves a family," said Kimberly Irwin, the band's drum major.

Their hard work has paid off. Senior Madeline Rende, the band's other co-president, recalled that the entire band was invited to play in the movie "Spider-Man 3."

"We played when he got the keys to the city," she said.

By hosting the event, the East Ramapo marching band raises money for food and transportation to other districts and for a trip to perform at Disney World later in the year.

"Everyone loves Ramapo," said Darlene Jackson, whose son Christian plays in the Copiague High School Band. "They always bring the house down."

Joe Farmer, deputy superintendent of East Ramapo Central School District, is proud of his district's commitment to teaching music in elementary, middle and high school. He said the students' commitment to the band and the resulting success has a "transferring effect" on their academic work and desire to go to college.

After the awards were given, Farmer congratulated all the participants.

"You are all winners. What tremendous talent we have here," he said.

Spring Valley PTA President Shelly Forde, was proud of East Ramapo's showcase, "Shining Star," which featured songs by Earth Wind and Fire.

During their performance, the band displayed its famous "guillotine" move, where members of the brass section swing their instruments over each other's heads just as their band mates duck out of the way.

"They always put on a good show," Forde said, adding that the band will open for the group Soldier Boy at a Battle of the Bands in Giants Stadium next week. One Ramapo band mother, Portia Davis, who volunteered at the event, was proud that her son Jahmar played a saxophone solo of the '70s hit "That's the Way of the World." She said both her sons have enjoyed playing in the band.

"Music is part of their heart and soul," she said.

Copiague High School band director John Weavers said the students in his Class VI band, the largest in the competition, reflect his community and represent immigrant families from 26 countries.

Weavers said what's great about being in a marching band is the success and recognition the youngsters enjoy. His band has won five championship state titles and will travel to Washington, D.C., next month to participate in celebrations for the 25th anniversary of the Vietnam Memorial Wall.

Behind the scenes, Carl Calderaro has been a "pit dad," a parent who's helped move the heavy percussion for the Deer Park High School marching band for seven years. His son, Anthony, an 11th-grader, plays all kinds of saxophones.

"These kids work really hard," he said of their discipline and the mentoring they do for each other.

"The seniors will take the little ones under their wing. They help each other," he said.

Bands at yesterday's event came from Manhasset, Hicksville, River Dell, Deer Park, Suffern, Onteora, Port Chester and Copiague. They will meet one another again in a few weeks at a larger competition in Syracuse.

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