

DHS preps for marching contest

Published: 2005-09-19

By: Staff Report

DANVILLE — On Saturday, Danville will play host to a day-long event showcasing, perhaps, one of the most under-recognized student activities in high school: marching band.

The 32nd Annual Viking Invitational Marching Band Competition will feature 21 Illinois bands and will include an exhibition performance by the Danville High School Band of Vikings titled “Academic Festival.”



The Danville High School marching band practices on the football field last week to prepare for the Viking Invitational Marching Band Competition. (Photo by Matt Huber)

“It’s a chance to see some of central Illinois’ finest young people,” said DHS band director Mark Lindvahl. “These kids work really hard to put on a great show. It’s a great day of good music and pageantry.”

Plenty of people, however, miss the spectacle.

“Too many people at football games get a snack and talk to somebody instead of really giving their full attention to what’s going on at halftime,” said Christopher Bontjes, band director at Westville High School.

“It’s a really exciting medium that I think is underappreciated.”

Those who pay attention get a treat.

“Marching band competitions are really energetic. They’re loud and fun, and it’s fun to compare the different ones in different classes. If it’s a nice day, it’s really fun to be there,” said senior and Westville High School drum major Lindsey Ketcherside.

Westville’s marching band will compete at DHS with its show “’80s Rock Legends,” which features music from the bands Styx and Journey.

It’s sure to be a crowd-pleaser, said Ketcherside and fellow drum major and senior Tara

Scott.

Bontjes said the competition at DHS is a good learning tool for the Westville marchers.

“They always have quality judges. That makes a difference and helps us to refine the show for upcoming competitions,” he said.

“This is the time of year when band programs concentrate on precision and perfection, because we’re working on the same 10 minutes worth of music for three months, so we get to go into great detail and get good at what we’re doing.”

The competition offers an opportunity for the DHS marchers to raise money for their trip to Florida, where they hope to perform at Disney World’s “Magic Music Days” show.

Last year, only nine bands were able to attend the annual competition because of a scheduling conflict.

The band raised about \$6,000 last year, but with another 11 bands in the competition this year, Lindvahl said his students hope to raise more than \$10,000.

Scott said she and fellow band mates are excited about their show’s prospects.

“The show is going really well,” she said. “I’m hoping we do really well. I can’t guarantee it. We’re up against some pretty tough competition. We’ll have our minds set and ready for performance.”

DHS also is preparing for its competition season.

“We finally got our show learned,” Lindvahl said. “We are anxious to put it on the field. It’s a great group of kids, and we’re looking forward to polishing the show and the season goes, and seeing other bands. That’s always exciting for us.”