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News

# Prepping for prime time

Thursday, November 27, 2008

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BY MAYA KREMEN  
STAFF WRITER



TEANECK — Drums thundered, red flags cut through the air and teenagers from around the country flashed grins at the imaginary crowd.



ADENA STEVENS / SPECIAL TO THE RECORD

**Adrienne Lorick, 16, a junior at Dwight Morrow High School, practices at Dwight Morrow High School as she and 235 students from across the United States create Macy's Great American Marching Band, to perform in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade.**

Twenty-four hours before the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, the Great American Marching Band was almost ready for its debut.

Almost, but not quite.

"You can do better than that!" Rick Good, director of bands at Auburn University in Auburn, Ala., shouted into the cold air of the Teaneck Armory. "Play that first note like it's forever!"

They may smile while they march,

but practicing for this parade is no joke. The 209 high school students rehearse for three days, beginning at the crack of dawn.

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They prepare to walk three miles — rain or shine — and perform in front of 50 million television viewers and thousands of cheering spectators.

"When I get home, I just go to sleep," said Adrienne Lorick, Flag Line majorette for the Dwight Morrow and the



ADENA STEVENS / SPECIAL TO THE RECORD

**At Dwight Morrow High School in Englewood, dancers practice their routines for the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade.**

Academies@Englewood Marching Band. "I'm excited. We just had two days to learn it, but it's coming together."

The band is made up of the best high school band members from all 50 states, including 11 from New Jersey. Rehearsals were held in the Armory and at the Dwight Morrow gym — picked because of their proximity to New York.

Band members auditioned via videotape, and paid their own way. Some brought their families.

Parents and siblings from Ohio, Virginia and Hawaii dotted the bleachers of the Armory, watching practice in coats and hats.

"She's having the time of her life, from what we understand," said Shelly Victor of Cincinnati, Ohio, who flew in to watch her daughter dance. "We haven't seen her at all."

A whistle blew, transforming a mass of students in warm-up jackets and jeans into 26 perfect lines. The horns and drums played a rendition of "Jingle Bell Jam."

The students will do more than march in the parade — they'll retain the knowledge from the rehearsals, said Dwight Morrow music director Gary Hollander.

"When they come back in the spring, they're going to bring what they learned in November with them," he said.

It also gives the chance for kids to mingle. Dwight Morrow's Drum Major Rita Johnson met teenagers from Arizona who had never been in cold enough weather to see their breath before, and others who had never been to Manhattan.

Johnson, a veteran of several other New York parades, was able to give them some tips. Still, she admitted to being a little excited herself about playing alto saxophone in the middle of Herald Square in front of millions of people.

"I've watched it before," she said. "But now we're going to be doing it."

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