



PHOTO COURTESY OF GARY HOLLANDER

Members of the Dwight Morrow/Academies@Englewood marching band performed at New York's Carnegie Hall April 30. In the back row is Jordums Cespedes, Akeem Bennett, Jonathan Jean-Baptiste, Brian Albert, Brian Rodgers, (middle row) Director Dr. Gary Hollander, Ramel Richardson, Rashawn Williams, Josh Rosa, assistant Director Tony Hillaire, (front row) Michael Smith, Gissele Casco and Perry Yu.



# Not your average drumline

## Dwight Morrow/Academies band gains recognition

BY CRISTINA KUMKA  
Staff Writer

When band instructor and teacher Dr. Gary Hollander met the Dwight Morrow High School/Academies@Englewood (DMAE) marching band in the summer of 2005, there were only about 20 participants. Today, the number is closer to 100.

Student interest and participation in the extracurricular activity has paved the way to college scholarships, the recording of a CD and numerous performances in nationally televised parades and most recently, at Carnegie Hall with the New York Pops.

According to Hollander, who is accredited with bridging the gap between athletics and musical instruction by reforming the newly titled DMAE marching band, participation in band "is the cool thing to do" in the Englewood Public School District.

"It provides the encouragement to academically succeed and provides an outlet to motivate students to do better," he said.

The band, made up of students from the Dwight Morrow High School campus and Janis Dismus Middle School, includes a rifle line and drumline and performs the much-acclaimed southern, traditional show style of marching and instrument play. The DMAE band is unique in that its members and

style are equally original in northern Bergen County.

"First of all you make friends and then learn from them," drumline Captain Tyrell Bell said. "There are some things others can do that I can't and I grow fond of them."

The emergence of motion pictures such as "Drumline" have additionally fueled growing support for the southern style of marching band and the unity it inspires, Bell said.

The goal of Hollander, to make the high school marching band experience as revered and respected as it is at some U.S. colleges, is becoming a reality.

"Colleges put marching band in the athletic realm. You have to be in good shape for the parade season," he said.

A collaborative higher-education organization called the Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) has offered at least six seniors on the DMAE marching band, interested in pursuing a spot on a college-level band, achievement scholarships to attend institutions nationwide.

Bell, a member of the band since his freshman year, has gained admission and a scholarship to the Berkeley College of Music in Boston.

"As a member of a band, you learn to work with others around you and there are many outlets for

advancement," Bell said.

And with proceeds from the sales of a recently compiled CD of the band's drum beats or cadences, 22 younger band hopefuls have been given the opportunity to go to a summer band camp in Hampton, Va.

The Board of Education recently sponsored the purchase of new band uniforms as well as a trip for Hollander to a HBCU college fair to network with college band directors, in hopes of spreading the word about DMAE talent.

Board member Stephen Brown said the revival of the band program under Hollander has been "astronomical."

"He's reached down and involved middle school students, giving them the opportunity to become involved in an activity for at least five years," Brown said.

"If you look at other effects, aside from moves and music, you will see a discussion about college happening a lot sooner," he said.

---

*The DMAE marching band is scheduled to perform at the Memorial Day parade in Englewood May 28 and at the Bergen County Teens Arts Festival June 1. Hollander and band members will also be offering diversity workshops at area elementary schools May 29. E-mail: kumka@northjersey.com or call 201-894-6705.*