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SOUTHINGTON - Marching bands from around the state converged at Southington High School Saturday for Music of the Knight, the Blue Knights Marching Band's big home competition.

At least 18 bands competed at the Southington High School football field in the chilly autumn air. Parents, friends and family cheered from the bleachers as each band gave a unique performance. Each band got in a quick practice in the school parking lot beforehand.

Cheshire High School won the top honor Saturday night as best overall band. Parent Barbara Fraser, whose son and daughter play in the Maloney High School band in Meriden, said watching the performance is an emotional event.

"I've been doing this for nine years and every time I shed a tear," said Fraser, who is president of the parent booster club. "It's an overwhelming feeling to see how the kids do and how hard they work."

Music of the Knight is the Blue Knight Marching Band's biggest fundraising event, said Eric Pehmoeller, a Blue Knights band parent who is vice president in charge of operations for the parent group, the Band Backers. Planners hope to raise \$35,000 to cover marching band expenses. The competition is the biggest of its kind in New England, he said.

Students in the Blue Knights Marching Band look forward to a home event, he said.

"They're really psyched (about competing) and work really hard," Pehmoeller said, "but this is special for them because it's a home show."

Blue Knights marching band alumni show up for the event and band members in groups of three get to escort bands to the field, which makes the event extra special, he said.

Blue Knights parents spent three days setting up for the event, he said, and they planned on working on cleanup until 2 a.m.

Bands presented creative themes. The Sheehan Marching Band, for instance, performed to a cinema theme in which band members and the color guard performed songs from "Star Wars" and "Indiana Jones" movies along with other hit movie themes.

The band spent the entire day practicing for the event, said Kathi Zygmunt, whose son performs in the band.

"They worked really hard," she said. "They're a great group of kids."

Awards among local bands are as follows: Berlin High School won first place in group I. In group III, Lyman Hall High School in Wallingford won fourth place and Cheshire High School won first place. In group IV, Sheehan High School in Wallingford won fifth place and Maloney High School in Meriden won third.

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