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Anderson wins Band Day

Merged schools win Band Day

By Tricia L. Nadolny and Gregg Montgomery

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Anderson High School captured the Indiana State Fair Band Day competition Friday, bringing pride to a community that had to combine its two high schools into one.

It was the 14th win for an Anderson school in the State Fair competition. Muncie South took second and Richmond finished third.

Anderson's 113-member band performed its show "The Six Pillars of Character" under the direction of Douglas R. Fletcher and David Robbins.

Anderson and the former Highland High School merged this year because of declining enrollment in the economically struggling district. Highland won last year's Band Day competition.

"We were all unsure at first, but it was worth the combining," Anderson drum major Layke Jones, a former Highland student, said in a State Fair release. "We had a feeling (we'd win). We worked our hardest, and that work paid off."

Said Kelli Sears, Jones' counterpart, "I've

been so proud of our band and what we've been able to do over the summer."


This year, 49 high school bands from across the state participated in the competition. After each had given its four- to six-minute performance, the judges announced the Sweet Sixteen, and another round of routines followed.

By the time the last trumpet had sounded, there had been more than 12 hours of competition. And it's more than just marching; the bands often go to great lengths to upstage one another not just on musical ability, but also on visual effects.

"Some will bring out everything and the kitchen sink," said Mark Culp, a judge. "Some will take a more minimalist approach."

Judy Buttery, 61, whose grandson is a member of the Union County High School band in Liberty, was shocked the first time she went to one of his competitions.

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"I just thought they'd come out and play and go off the field," she said. "But some of them bring their props in semi trucks."

Tipton High School's band dragged a 15-foot whale onto the track, which a member of the color guard heroically dispatched by the end of the performance.

Morristown Junior-Senior High School marched before a backdrop of a glittering Chinese dragon.

Fountain City's Northeastern High School included a story of love between an American Indian and a cowboy in its western-themed performance.

There were costume changes, drum solos and dance interludes.

Many smaller bands come to Band Day with no expectation to win or make the Sweet Sixteen.

"The general idea of this is just to be fun," said Christopher Abbe, 31, band director at Howe Community High School. "While the other competitions can be cutthroat, this is just (to) come and enjoy your state."

Following their performances, the bands celebrated next to the Grandstand and posed for a group picture.

Temperatures Friday were only in the mid-80s, but a polyester uniform or a hat shaped like a Q-Tip can make it feel a lot

hotter. So organizers set up misting fans and water stations to help the kids cool down.

"Lapel band, did you get that crowd going or what!" Greg Scott, Lapel High School band director, yelled as his group celebrated.

"They achieved their potential today," he said.

This year, three schools from Indianapolis performed.

"It's really hard in IPS to get kids motivated," Abbe said. "And this is a great way to get them motivated. They want to come do this."

This year, for the first time in decades, Shortridge Magnet High School was a part of Band Day. The students performed a medley by Earth, Wind and Fire, many using instruments provided by the school.

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"At first we had no marching experience," said Noni Barrett, 12. "Some of us weren't even in advanced band. We were in beginner band.

"And we really pulled through. Here we are, performing at the state's Band Day."

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