

MACOMB TOWNSHIP

# 'A good way to cap off the year'

*Band performs in Thanksgiving Day Parade and on front lawn*

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Dakota High School's marching band performs in the neighborhood of Chrissy VanDeVen, who won a raffle to have the band perform at her home on Thanksgiving as part of a fundraiser. (Photo provided by Martin Kohl)

MACOMB TOWNSHIP — The marching band from Dakota High School continued its tradition of having a very busy Thanksgiving Day.

For most of the 183-member band, that meant waking up around 5 a.m. to hop on buses and head to downtown Detroit for America's Thanksgiving Day Parade.

The band, which director Rob Abend said has performed in at least eight consecutive parades, performed a medley of Christmas numbers, as well as "Light My Fire" by The Doors, throughout the 90-minute, 3-mile march.

"I think as soon as we get onto the streets of Detroit, and when you get downtown, now that it's starting to thrive a little bit more, it's really a cool experience for our kids to perform on that stage in front of that many people, especially with it being televised," Abend said. "As much work as it is and being away from our families on Thanksgiving, I think it's an incredible experience for our students. It's just really cool to be in that environment."

There is an annual online voting competition, as well as a judges panel, to determine the top high school band performance in the parade. Dakota was defending its title from 2014.

After performing downtown, Dakota hopped back on board its buses and headed to the home of Chrissy and Jason VanDeVen for its third annual Thanksgiving front lawn performance.

The VanDeVen family won a raffle drawing to have the band play a 30-minute performance on the front of lawn of their home.

“That’s always a neat experience not only for them and us, but there were probably 100 or more people who came to watch throughout the neighborhood,” Abend said.

Dakota’s band began the tradition of the home show performance in Abend’s first year as band director three years ago. The raffle is a fundraiser for Dakota’s band, and this year Abend estimated that it raised about \$6,000 through the sale of about 600 raffle tickets.

“When we first started this, I wasn’t sure how good it was going to go,” Abend said. “I thought it might be kind of weird playing in someone’s lawn, but every year the winners have made it a neat experience in their own way.”

Most of the songs played for the home show came from Dakota’s halftime performances this football season, and included “Piano Man” and “We Didn’t Start the Fire” by Billy Joel, “Burn” by Ellie Goulding and “Fire” by Jimi Hendrix.

“I think it makes for a nice way of giving thanks to the people that support us, and going to perform just for a family is really cool. Seeing other people come out of their houses and ask questions, it’s a neat surprise for everyone in the neighborhood,” Abend said. “It’s a good way to cap off the year.”