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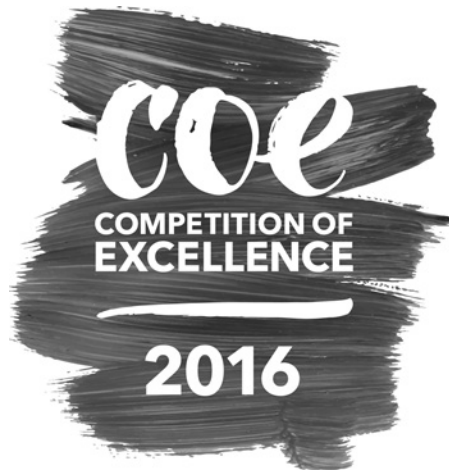
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Competition of Excellence 2016

With more show choir competition events popping up all over the country, Westside High School's Competition of Excellence (COE) continues to be a favorite for the choirs, judges and parents of the participants. No matter where you come from, or what school you represent, there is no denying the amount of energy flowing from the stage throughout the day. Show choir season has arrived, and COE continues its great tradition of showcasing choirs from all over the Midwest.

This year, the weather cooperated with a sunny day and warmer-than-usual temperatures for the event. Nineteen choirs representing 10 schools competed in this single-day event, which included three competition categories: Female, Prep and Open. With more than 250 volunteers helping to make this day a success, one doesn't have to go far to see a welcom-



ing smile, or hear words of encouragement for participating choirs.

Each year, Westside students decorate homerooms for each competing team, and parents provide over 300 brownies and 300 Rice Krispies treats
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A Judge's Perspective



Linda Southard has been judging show choirs for over 20 years. She spent her first 33 years as a teacher at Buffalo Grove

High School where she developed an award-winning show choir. Getting in on the ground floor, Linda has developed a reputation as a choreographer, arranger and a consultant for numerous show choir workshops and clinics. She is a sought-after judge for the regional FAME and Nationals competitions.

At COE there were two different types of judges: A scoring judge, who evaluates the overall vocal music, tone, intensity, and pitch; and a critique judge, whose main responsibility is to provide instant feedback following a performance. Linda indicated there are a number of areas that receive the judges' focus like: composition of choreography, intonation of the choir, blending of choir with the band, vocals, costuming, facial expres-

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Westside show choir students decorated classrooms for each visiting choir.

Simply Irresistible Then and Now



Simply Irresistible performing at Ramageddon 2016 at Ralson High School.

Westside's all-female show choir has been simply irresistible for 15 years! This year is no exception. Recently, judges in Kansas City and in Ralston were "unable to resist" awarding the group the title of *Women's Division Grand Champions*. In each event, Sim-

In fact, SI has always been recognized as a top show choir for talented young women who love to perform. Three directors have led the ensemble, beginning with David Moore who basically founded show choir at Westside. Moore, who retired in 1998, shared

Many of the challenges we face have to do with the fact we are lacking male singers. Seeing the different ways we overcome those challenges is such an interesting experience.

—Sydney Schulenberg,
SI Senior



Sydney Schulenberg

ply Irresistible (SI) not only finished at the top of the women's category, but proved their overall strength by earning the **third highest point score** among all who competed in KC and being named **second runner up** among all competitors in Ralston.

these historical details: "Swing Choir, as it was called in the early days, was a hard-sell to upper-class students. The first year (1988), we were able to recruit about 16 singers. We called it the 'Varsity Swing Choir.' I also initiated an extracurricular swing choir for freshman. Originally, the varsity group wore teal dresses and ties and named themselves the Teal Temptations.

By this time, Freshman Show Choir became part of the school day and named themselves Warrior Express. As numbers grew, it became obvious that there were more girls interested in swing choir than there were boys. So we started a group of all young women called, cleverly enough, Women's Show Choir. At some point, the varsity group retired their teal outfits in favor of a multicolor costume, and some of the students started calling themselves The Amazing Technicolor Show Choir. The women then decided they had to have a name, so one of them suggested Simply Irresistible and it stuck."

Upon retirement, Moore passed the job on to Doran Johnson, who recalled that they initially let freshmen try out for SI before deciding everyone should start in Warrior Express. Current SI director, Kyle Avery, has been on board for the past twelve years. When asked how soon he begins planning for the next show choir season, Avery responded, "As a director, you are always listening to songs with the thought that you might be listening to the next show choir song. I listen for songs that I think will dance well or be fun to put on stage. Initially, it's a long list that gets narrowed down based on which songs might work well together. Finally, around April of each year, the choreographer (this year it was Chad Alexander) says yes or no to the songs on the short list and helps create the order for the show."

The next step, Avery explained, is to start thinking about costumes. The year that Avery started directing SI, all of the girls wore white tops with either a purple or blue skirt. They used the same costumes the following year but changed out of the skirts into silver pants for the closer. "The silver pants were kind of a big deal because costume changes weren't the norm that they are today," he said. Avery now consults with Gail McInnis who works on a national level with numerous show choirs. McInnis' expertise is determining what costumes look good with each song.

This year, SI has added some visual elements that are outside of the usual



formula. "It's a riskier show," Avery said, "but the girls are all really excited about it." Avery added that this year's group, "... is among the largest—with 47 girls performing. That's the number that the stage exactly accommodates. The odd number works best because 46 would create a hole."



Sarah Hermann

As for the girls, they enjoy performing together. Senior Sydney Schulenberg said, "The thing I like most about being involved in SI is that being in a women's choir is such a different experience than being in a mixed show choir. Many of the challenges we face

have to do with the fact we are lacking male singers. Seeing the different ways we overcome those challenges is such an interesting experience."

Sarah Hermann, a senior who joined SI this year, has enjoyed getting to know all the girls and making some great friendships. She added, "My fa-

It always warms my heart to see members from Warrior Express and ATSC sitting in the front row and cheering us on! I am proud to be a part of such a friendly and amazing group of people.

**—Sarah Hermann,
SI Senior**

vorite thing about being in SI is being a part of the Westside show choir family. It always warms my heart to see members from Warrior Express and ATSC sitting in the front row and cheering us on! I am proud to be a part of such a friendly and amazing group of people."

MEET Hunter Boe



Hunter Boe has joined Westside's Vocal department as a student teacher this spring. He is currently a senior at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln campus and plans on graduating this May with a Bachelor of Music Education, BME. Hunter is from Lincoln and attended Norris High School where he was involved in numerous choirs and show choirs. While at UNL, he has been involved in the University Men's Chorus, University Singers and the Big Red Singers. During his free time, Hunter serves as a freelance choreographer for a number of show choirs and musicals in Nebraska and Iowa. Hunter wants to thank everyone in the Westside community for being so welcoming and kind. "It has been a wonderful experience thus far and I feel so lucky to have the opportunity to work and learn from such talented and dedicated students!"

On the Road With Westside's Show Choirs







Hastings Riverside – Grand Champions of COE 2016.

to satisfy everyone's sweet tooth. Parent volunteers staff a Hospitality room to give bus drivers a place to relax while their groups compete.

Volunteers began to set up for the event at 3:30, Friday afternoon with the Homerooms decorated by 9:00 p.m. Many volunteers returned at 5:30 Saturday morning to open and prepare for the first buses to arrive at 6:15 a.m.

Highlights from this year's competition included:

- The first appearance of Momentum from Omaha Marian High school. They are directed by Rob Huebner and choreographed by Megan Tantilillo, two well-known names to the Westside community.
- KETV came to report on COE and featured Momentum in a segment that aired on the 10 p.m. news.
- A parent from Minnesota shared, "It is always nice coming to COE at Westside because the volunteers are always so welcoming, and the

environment of this competition is so positive."

- Katie O'Brien served as Master of Ceremonies Saturday evening. Katie is a Westside graduate and is an actress and comedienne working with her comedy group, The Katydids. Currently, Katie is starring in, writing and producing the television show *Teachers*. The show is on TV Land every Wednesday evening at 9:30 CST, or on HULU.

The evening culminated with Riverside Company, from Hastings High School in Hastings, Minnesota, taking the Grand Champion Trophy for a second year in a row. One parent interviewed was not shy in sharing that as kids get older, parents have the privilege of traveling with them, chaperoning them, getting to know their friends, and participate with them in a unique and positive activity thus you get to know these kids on a personal level.

Thank You to Our Volunteers

A BIG THANK YOU to our vocal music parents! Our kids aren't the only ones who know how to move well! You guys orchestrated a massively successful Competition of Excellence on January 30th, filling more than 250 shifts and many of you worked from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. that day! When we needed an extra set of hands,

parents stepped up time and time again that day and you performed so professionally. It was great to get to know the wonderful families behind our talented students.

Sue Seline and
Courtney Hellman,
COE Co-Chairs

Judges from page 1

sions, and the overall effect of the show. Show choir is very fluid, always evolving, and definitely isn't a "one-size-fits-all" activity.

Linda has continually been asked back to Westside to be a critique judge. She loves working with the students immediately after the show when they are riding the "high" of their performance. She helps groups to expand on what they have just done. She gives them ideas on taking it to the next level, doing something better or reworking an area that might have been more challenging. One of her main goals is to make her feedback a positive experience. She wants to leave these groups feeling excited about their performance and ready to do it again even better the next time they perform.

During the finals section of a competition, Linda indicated that one of the big things she looks at is whether she is entertained for the complete 15 minutes of the show. She indicates the songs do not necessarily need to tell a story as long as they are entertaining. She looks at the overall program to see if the group is doing what they have been asked to do. Linda indicated it is not so much the "what" of the program but how they bring the whole concept of the program to fruition.

Linda shared she enjoys judging at competitions where there is a quality program, she can enjoy the people who she works with, and the way the judges are treated. There is the positive attitude of the workers and joy in participating in what the kids are experiencing. This starts at the top. The kids learn this and see this vision. The parents get the vision also. She indicated that Mr. Johnson and the Westside staff have a fabulous program. "It is obvious that they seriously care more about the kids and what they get out of the music program than the trophy they earn, that comes from the heart."

Thank You to the 2015 - 2016 Hall of F.A.M.E.* Members (as of 1/22/2016)

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The Wilson Family

*Fund for Attaining Musical Excellence.

The names listed above are current as of January 22, 2016. We apologize for the omission of any donor names due to publication deadlines. An updated list will be included in the next issue of this newsletter.

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Enjoy the perks of membership*

<http://www.wcsfoundation66.org/support/hall-of-f-a-m-e/>

*See website for a list of membership benefits.

2015-2016 Vocal Music Calendar

Date	Event	Choirs
February 19/20/21 (Fri-Sun)	Great River Show Choir Invitational (Davenport, IA) Depart at 2:00 p.m. on Fri/Return 1:00 p.m. on Sun	ATSC/SI
February 27 (Sat)	Norris Fields of Talent Show Choir Invitational	WE
March 5 (Sat)	Lewis Central Clash of the Titans	ATSC/SI/WE
March 22 (Tues)	6 th -12 th Grade Choral Festival 7:00 p.m. (Main Gym)	Warrior/ATSC
March 30-April 3 (Wed-Sun)	Show Choir Nationals (Grand Ole Opry, Nashville, TN)	ATSC
April 7 (Thur)	Show Choir Auditions 3:30 p.m. -10:00 p.m. (Vocal Room)	
April 17 (Sun)	Metro Show Choir Showcase (Holland Center)	ATSC
April 19 (Tues)	Pre-Contest Concert 7:30 p.m. (Main Gym)	Warrior/Band/Orchestra
April 20-23 (Wed-Sat)	District Music Contest (@Bellevue)	Warrior/Soloists
May 4 (Wed)	Spring Choral Concert 7:30 p.m. (Auditorium)	Warrior/Concert/Freshman
May 6 (Fri)	ATSC Picnic 6:30 p.m. (Courtyard/Little Theater)	ATSC
May 7 (Sat)	An Evening of Show Choirs 7:00 p.m. (WHS Aud.)	ATSC/SI/WE

For up-to-date information, event schedules and photos, visit westsidechoirs.com.

Acknowledgments

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