



# Voices

## WESTSIDE VOCAL MUSIC

### Inside This Issue

Annual 6-12-Grade Choral Festival .....	1
Good News for Music Education. ....	2
ATSC Makes Top 10 at FAME National Finals. ...	2
WHS Student Shines in National Competition ...	3
Thank You from the President. ....	3
Hall of F.A.M.E. ....	4

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## Annual 6-12-Grade Choral Festival



## Good News for Music Education

Earlier this year, the National Association for Music Education (NAfME) mobilized more than 10,000 music education advocates to send letters to their lawmakers. As a result of this grassroots effort, a new bipartisan proposal known as the Senate Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) includes "Music" as a core academic subject. What makes this draft legislation such good news is that it would ensure that all students, regardless of race or economic status, have access to high quality music programs in their schools.

Founded in 1907, the NAfME represents 140,000 students and teachers who are members of middle/junior- and senior-high school Tri-M Music Honor Societies, Collegiate NAfME chapters on campuses around the nation, and more than 60,000 PreK-12 music teachers, who work daily to ensure students receive a quality music education that prepares them for the 21<sup>st</sup> century workplace.

Save the Date for the  
**Rising Stars  
Show Choir Camp**  
December 12, 2015

## ATSC Makes Top 10 at FAME National Finals

FAME's Show Choir Nationals competition was held in Chicago, April 24-26, with mixed groups performing Saturday from 9:00 a.m. until 10:00 p.m. After the long day of amazing performances, ATSC was named in the top ten and Xzavier Fort was named the Best Male Performer.

Reflecting on the event a couple days later, Doran Johnson said, "From my perspective it was the smoothest trip I have undertaken, mostly because the students understood the significance of the event. They had spent the year preparing for their moment in the national spotlight and nothing was going to get in the way of their success, especially not a 10:30 a.m. performance time. I knew when I looked into their eyes during their warm-up that magic was going to happen and memories were going to be made. What I wasn't really prepared for was how supportive they would be of the other competing groups. Watching more than ten shows at the end of the competition season can be a challenge, but they enjoyed seeing so many different types of shows and they rewarded every group with an



*Xzavier Fort received the Best Male Performer award.*



*ATSC band members catch a photo op under the FAME marquee.*

enthusiastic response. On stage and off, these young men and women are a shining example of what is right about today's youth."

A parent, who rode the bus with students, considered the event memorable in many ways. For her, an unexpected highlight of the trip was listening to ATSC members singing a variety of songs on the bus ride home. She said, "It was so meaningful because it occurred to me that what these students are taking with them from their time in show choir is much more than trophies and medals. They have been inspired by the phenomenal vocal music teaching at Westside High School to love singing; singing for the sake of singing. They've also learned a few other things, too, I'm guessing. Perhaps a few things about supporting one another through successful moments and those moments perhaps not as successful, and perhaps a few things about how, together, they can accomplish things they might never have thought possible."



# WHS Student Shines in National Competition

Jazz hands and Bach sonatas may seem worlds apart to many people, but in the immensely gifted hands of the extraordinarily talented Jennifer Ahn, they coexist quite peacefully.

Vocal music program member Jennifer Ahn made Westside High School proud earlier this year when she earned second place honors in the Senior String competition at the Music Teachers National Association (MTNA) Conference Awards held in Las Vegas.

Ruth Meints, of the Omaha Conservatory of Music, has been Jennifer's teacher since Jennifer and her family moved to Omaha when she was in the third grade. "My parents had heard about this new teacher and heard wonderful things about her. They wanted me to start taking lessons with her, and it was a very good choice," Jennifer said.

The national competition required 30 minutes of uninterrupted playing of differing styles of music. Jennifer said that she and Ruth Meints together selected the music she would perform. "We have very similar tastes in music. She knows what my strong points are and we kind of figure out a program together so it works out really nicely."

Singing has also been a part of Jennifer's musical education. She began participating in show choir in seventh grade and only stopped because her



*Jennifer Ahn performing with the Omaha Area Youth Orchestra.*

super-packed schedule simply did not allow time for show choir practices, performances and competitions. She does participate in Warrior Choir and has played violin with all of the choirs in the past, something she enjoyed very much.

Jennifer feels that her studies in vocal and instrumental music support each other. "All of the stuff that I learn through the violin helps with the musical aspects of singing, not just technical things like finding the notes, but also overall phrasing: how to sing something so that the audience can understand and interpret it in their own way. That's what I implement from my violin playing," Jennifer said. She added, "There are also a lot of

phrasing aspects and musicality that I learn from my vocal training."

Vocal music and violin playing also interact in terms of pitch, Jennifer said. "There's intonation where you figure out if you're singing in the right pitch or playing in the right pitch. Throughout my violin studies, teachers have told me, 'Focus on your intonation,' and I guess that ear training helped me keep my open pitch when I'm singing in the choir." Another reason Jennifer participates in choir? "I really enjoy singing, it's definitely a lot of fun, and relaxing."

Jennifer is a member of the Frontier String Ensemble and participates in the Omaha Area Youth Orchestra (OAYO), where she was selected as the winner of both their 2011 and 2014 Youth Concerto Competitions. She became the first person in the history of OAYO to win their competition more than once. In addition, she has won several other competitions, including ones hosted by the Lincoln Symphony Orchestra, the Kearney Symphony Orchestra and the Hastings Symphony Orchestra. Jennifer also teaches young violin students through a program of the Omaha Conservatory of Music called "String Sprouts."

Jennifer will be attending the Manhattan School of Music in the fall, pursuing a degree in violin performance.

## Thank You from the President

As the 2014-2015 school year draws to a close, we would like to thank Westside's vocal music staff and families for their dedication and support throughout this year. Without your donations, willingness to volunteer your time, and general commitment to this cause, our vocal music program could not maintain the level of excellence for which we are known.

Special thanks to the following individuals:

- **Kirsten Hosman** for serving as VMPA Treasurer with skill and humor.
- **Shelby Foral** for expertly performing the duties as VMPA Secretary
- **Eric and Natalie Petersen** for serving as VMPA Vice Presidents
- **Natalie Petersen, Julie Trivilino, and Danna Barnhart** for assisting with publications
- **Julie McMullen** for her amazing work on Hall of Fame
- **John and Chrisi Hughes** for chairing Cabaret

- **Jackie Kroeger and Lori Farwell** for chairing Rising Stars Show Choir Camp
- **Jackie Kroeger and Julie Liakos** for chairing Competition of Excellence
- **Shannon Hoy** for Chairing Evening of Show Choirs
- **Sue Frerichs** for maintaining our Vocal Music Bulletin Boards
- **Tom and Buffy Ricceri** for transporting equipment throughout the country
- **Elizabeth Tape** for her selfless photography work
- **Jackie and Terry Kroeger** for always answering the phone with my numerous VMPA questions

Finally, a huge thank you to **Mr. Doran Johnson, Mr. Kyle Avery, and Mrs. Denise Millard** for their tremendous dedication and countless hours spent devoted to our children. We can't express our appreciation enough.

In Gratitude,  
Ann and Scott Hofmann

# Thank You to the 2014 - 2015 Hall of F.A.M.E.\* Members (as of 4/11/2015)

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\*Fund for Attaining Musical Excellence.

The names listed above are current as of April 11, 2015. 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.

## About Westside's Hall of F.A.M.E.

Since 2002, the Vocal Music Hall of F.A.M.E. (Fund for Attaining Musical Excellence) has provided funds to help Westside's show choir program become one of the best in the country. Join today and help continue the tradition!

Make Checks Payable to Westside Foundation. Mail to: Vocal Music Parents Association, Westside High School, 87th & Pacific Streets, Omaha, NE 68114.