



Inside This Issue

ATSC Participates in National Competition.	2
2017 Show Choir Competition Results.	3
It Starts With a BANG!	4
District Choral Competition a Huge Success	6
Hall of F.A.M.E. Members	7
From the VMPA President	8
Westside Receives Giger Foundation Grant	8

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2017 Westside Choral Festival

Looking Forward, And Back

Watching her son, Josh, dash up the gym bleachers and into the crowd of sixth- and eighth-graders to sing "Seed to Sow," Tricia Wonder swelled with conflicting emotions.

Wasn't it just yesterday that he was one of those wide-eyed sixth-graders awed by the talent of the older kids? Now it was one of many "lasts" as a Westside High School senior performing in Warrior Choir and ATSC.

Technically this annual concert is called the 6-12 Westside Choral Festival. But to most students and parents, it's the "Seed to Sow" concert, nicknamed for the final song every year when the Warrior Choir, the eighth-grade choir and all sixth-graders in the District sing side-by-side. The March 28 concert this year featured 469 sixth-graders, 140 eighth graders and 128 Warrior Choir members. ATSC and the Westside Connection show choir also performed.

The goal is to get younger students excited for the next level of vocal music



Josh Wonder gives his sister, Kerrigan, a hug before they sing "Seed to Sow."

while showcasing for parents how far kids progress from elementary through high school, according to Westside's Choral Director Doran Johnson.

Tricia Wonder can attest to this. As Josh settled in to sing next to his sister, Kerrigan, a sixth-grader at Hillside, he gave her a goofy, brotherly hug and it made Tricia excited to see her youngest child begin the journey her oldest had just finished.

"This concert is a great opportunity

for students to see how their skills progress when they stay in the vocal music program," she said. "Westside's choral directors help students discover and develop their abilities. The resulting maturity from year to year is amazing."

Josh said students look forward to the concert's more relaxed, informal vibe. Older students are encouraged to interact with the younger kids so they scatter among siblings or neighborhood kids to sing with. "It was especially fun this year because my sister was also in it," he said. "Her first and my last year, and we got to stand together for that song."

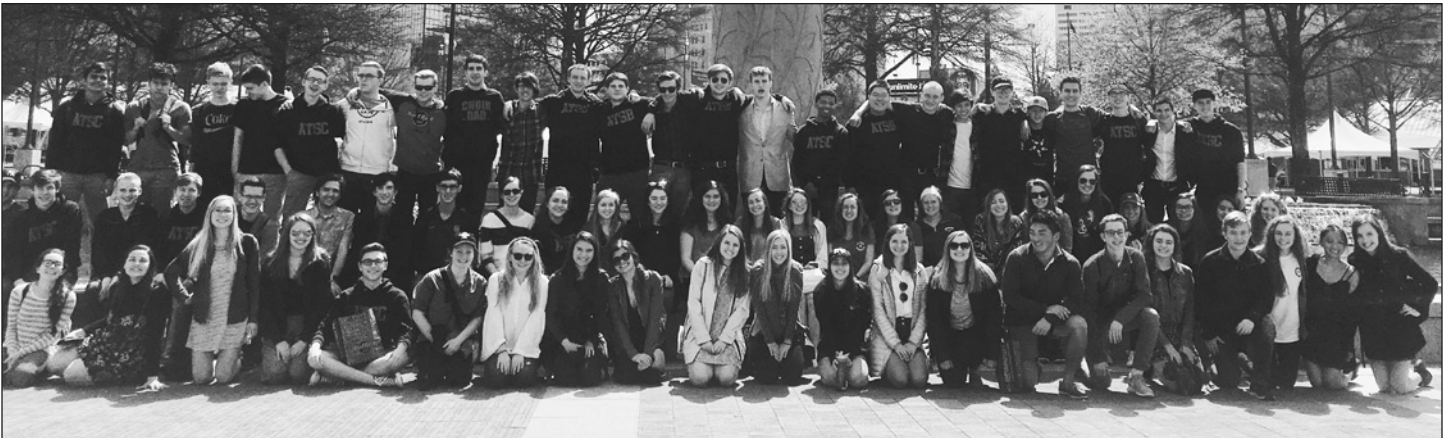
And, in a fashion, it's the older kids' way to give back. Josh says he remembers deciding in eighth grade to continue vocal music after he saw the high school groups perform. "A senior I knew pulled me up to the top riser when the men's groups performed together and he encouraged me to stay with it," Josh said.

During the concert, the sixth-grade
Seed to Sow to page 5



469 sixth-grade students representing all Westside elementary schools performed during the Winter Choral Festival.

ATSC Participates in National Competition



Members of ATSC and ATSB pose for a photo during their trip to Atlanta, Georgia.

Heart of America—Atlanta
This year’s competitive season for Westside’s Amazing Technicolor Show Choir and Show Band (ATSC/ATSB) culminated by earning First Runner-up to the Grand Champion and Best Costumes at the “Heart of America—Atlanta Show Choir Competition” in March. “I think both of our performances were the best of the whole season,” says **Katya Ward**, senior ATSC member and girls dance captain. “There was an energy on stage that we had never had before. I feel like we all were ready to perform and show everyone what we were made of.”
Ward’s sentiment echoes throughout. “The choir’s vocals were stunning and their choreography could not have been any cleaner. The band’s hits were tight and together, their balance was great, and the judge could only

find a couple things to comment on,” says **Simon Bessmer**, senior member of ATSB. “Personally I think that our ballad was our strongest number because that song is so touching to the heart and the beautiful solo sung by **Sam DeVries** touched the hearts of our audience every time he sang it.”
The national competition was held on Saturday, March 25, at the Westin Peachtree Plaza Hotel in downtown Atlanta, Georgia. Group members and many parents departed Omaha very early Thursday, March 23 arriving in Atlanta in the morning to enjoy a day of sight-seeing after lunch at the Hard Rock Café. The group then walked to the World of Coca Cola for a tour and visited Centennial Olympic Park. The evening ended with a Medieval Times Dinner and Tournament packed full of knights, horses, sword fighting and

jousting. “I personally loved visiting the Olympic Park,” says **Josh Wonder**, senior ATSC member. “To be able to stand on the ground where the best athletes in the world once stood was incredible.”
Friday, March 24 was another day
“...the performances we gave there were the best ones of the year. The whole band had so much energy and we were all just having fun and making memories behind the stage.”
— **Ashley Tyler**

packed with activity and experiences. The hotel was located within walking distance of still more amazing sights. First up was a CNN Studio Tour followed by a visit to the National Center for Civil and Human Rights Museum and a trip to the Georgia Aquarium. Lunch and dinner were left open for individual preferences. “Traveling to Atlanta with everyone was honestly a really fun experience. Even though there were times when we had to wait around for hours, everyone made it fun,” says Ward. “Plus, it was nice to be able to just walk around Atlanta in

groups rather than having to always be with the whole group.”
“I loved going to the Coca-Cola and the Civil/Human Rights Museums,” says **Tyler Banark**, junior ATSC member. “I loved drinking the soda at Coca-Cola and seeing the place was fantastic. As for the Civil and Human Rights Museum, I was moved by what the exhibits were showcasing and what we were being educated on.”
It also left a lasting impression on Bessmer. “The Civil Rights Museum is what impacted me the most of all the sightseeing we did. It was very eye opening to see how people used to be treated versus the way people are treated today,” he said.
“Atlanta was a really neat city and the performances we gave there were the best ones of the year. The whole band had so much energy and we were all just having fun and making memories behind the stage,” says **Ashley Tyler**, senior ATSB member. Tyler joined the band this year after participating as a show choir member freshman through junior year. “The



Enjoying lunch at the Hard Rock Cafe, Atlanta are (clockwise) Audrey McMullen, Anastassia Sedletsky, Maddie Haney and Josh Wonder.

transition from show choir to ATSB was different because it was looking at the show in a different way,” she said. “It was still looking at musicality and cleanliness but the cleaning was done to the music. Overall, I loved both



ATSC on stage at Heart of America in Atlanta.

environments and I’m thankful I was able to experience them.”
The Atlanta trip was more than just another competition. It was the last competition for this group of individuals. “My most memorable moment on this trip was definitely during the ballad in the finals performance, making eye contact with Mr. Johnson

National to page 5

2017 Show Choir Competition Results

ATSC
Viterbo 101 (La Crosse, WI)

- Grand Champion
- Best Choreography

Music Lives (Millard West)

- Grand Champion
- Best Vocals, Best Band, Best Choreography

Crystal Cup (Elkhorn South)

- Grand Champion
- Best Vocals, Best Band, Best Choreography

Clash of the Titans
(Lewis Central)

- Grand Champion
- Best Vocals

Galaxy of the Stars
(Millard North)

- Grand Champion
- Best Vocals, Best Band, Best Choreography
- Best Male Soloist (Sam DeVries)

Heart of America
(Atlanta, GA)

- 1st Runner Up
- Best Costumes

Simply Irresistible
Music Lives (Millard West)

- 1st Place Female Division

Crystal Cup (Elkhorn South)

- 3rd Place Female Division

Clash of the Titans
(Lewis Central)

- 3rd Place Female Division

Galaxy of the Stars
(Millard North)

- 1st Place Female Division

Warrior Express
Music Lives (Millard West)

- 1st Place Prep
- 5th Runner Up in Finals

Crystal Cup (Elkhorn South)

- 1st Place Prep Division

Clash of the Titans
(Lewis Central)

- 1st Place Prep Division

Galaxy of the Stars
(Millard North)

- 1st Place Prep Division



Nathan Wallace poses with an actor at Medieval Times Dinner and Tournament.

Next Year, VMPA Fundraising Starts With a BANG!

Fundraising will start with a bang this summer for Westside’s vocal music programs.

The Vocal Music Parents Association will round up 180 volunteers to sell fireworks June 24-July 5 in the Westgate Plaza Shopping Center lot. Half the profits go to the VMPA.

In addition to volunteering, you (and your friends and neighbors) should buy your sparklers, Roman candles and all things that go boom from the fireworks tent with the big “Westside Vocal Music” banner, says **Leneé Petri**, who organized the fundraiser. “There is no maximum on how much we can make,” she said.

The summer fundraiser is a great opportunity to get cash flow at a critical time, especially for show choir expenses, said **Sue Barnhart**, incoming president of VMPA. Bills for costumes, song arrangements and choreography often come in before VMPA has received money from its traditional fundraising events, she said.

“Sometimes it gets a little nip and tuck because our Hall of F.A.M.E. donations don’t start until August and we have to wait for money from Cabaret until November,” she said.

The city of Omaha grants a limited number of licenses for fireworks stands, and requires that a non-profit benefit from a portion of the profits. VMPA is partnering with a fireworks distributor named Wild Willy’s. Petri said a family friend affiliated with Wild Willy’s asked her last year if she had a group that could help with the fireworks stand. VMPA provides the people power while Wild Willy’s provides insurance, files permits and

paperwork, and supplies the fireworks.

Volunteer shifts for the fireworks stand are generally 4½ hours with sales starting at 8 a.m. and ending at 11 p.m. Volunteer signup has started at the link <http://signup.com/go/yVQ2B2>.

The fireworks tent also must be

While the fireworks stand is a new fundraiser for Westside’s vocal music program, an old one will be eliminated. VMPA will no longer raise money by providing workers for events at the Baxter Arena. The costs and effort associated with that fundraiser made it too difficult.

If all goes well, selling fireworks could become an annual fundraiser for VMPA, Petri said.

“It is very sustainable as a fundraiser,” she said. But she hopes some parents will offer to take the lead in supervising specific days this summer. And someone will need to take over her role of organizing after her daughter graduates from Westside next year.

For now, Petri

is organizing the event this year with Cathy Haney. If you have questions, you can contact them at leneepetri@cox.net or shaneyl@cox.net.

Petri thinks parents will find their volunteer time at the fireworks stand a rewarding way to raise money for vocal music programs. “I do think it can be fun. It’s a great way to meet people,” she said. “It’s an ideal opportunity to get involved and we are asking purely for time in exchange for bringing in some good money.”

Barnhart said the VMPA wasn’t necessarily seeking to add a new fundraiser but the timing of this opportunity was very attractive. A survey of parents determined there was enough volunteer commitment to make it work, she said. And while the school district hasn’t cut funding for Westside’s vocal music program, it hasn’t increased it, either. Meanwhile, costs keep increasing, she said, requiring diligent fundraising by the VMPA.

staffed around the clock—even after sales end for the night—so Petri and Barnhart are hoping someone will lend their camper for the nighttime shifts. The camper would be used for a break from the heat and bugs, and to get some sleep. While the nighttime volunteers are there to keep an eye on the fireworks, motion lights and other security measures also will be in place. Nights are broken into two shifts: 9 p.m. to 1 a.m. and 1 a.m. to 7 a.m.

At least one adult will oversee each shift at the fireworks stand, but student volunteers who are freshmen or older also are needed. Westside students who aren’t part of vocal music also can volunteer and their time will count toward service learning hours required for graduation.

Alumni of the vocal music program are welcome to volunteer, Petri said. Recent graduates home from college might find it fun to reconnect with their friends from choir while giving back to the vocal music program.



Westside Connection and the Amazing Technicolor Show Choir entertained the audience with selections from their shows.

Seed to Sow from page 1
ers performed three songs conducted by elementary music teachers sharing the duties. The eighth-grade chorus performed a few pieces and then split into men’s and women’s choruses with the Warrior Choir.

Westside Connection, the middle school show choir of 55 seventh- and eighth-graders, performed as did ATSC, demonstrating the progress from beginning in show choir to end.

And then the finale when all the voices – roughly 737 this year - come together for “Seed to Sow” complete with percussion and soloists.

“It really is the ultimate mass choir finale piece,” Johnson said.

A different song ended the choral festival, which was started long before Johnson arrived at Westside 19 years ago. He updated it to “Seed to Sow,” which allows him to feature sixth-graders and then layer in the other choirs. The song’s message – that each person has something to contribute – resonates with students of all ages.

“I think the older kids do look back and see the significance of the text as they near the end of their high school career. The song holds a lot of meaning to them at that point,” he said.

It even hits home with some parents. As she prepares to send her son off to college, Tricia Wonder said she was particularly struck by the song’s verse: “The world can use what you give within the mystery of our days.”

“It’s the hope and prayer of every parent of every graduate that they will make a difference in the world,” she said. “I’m grateful for the opportunities Josh has had at Westside. His experiences have not only allowed him to explore his passion for vocal music but also build confidence and maturity for the path ahead.”



Eighth-grade boys joined the Warrior Choir men, and eighth-grade girls joined the Warrior Choir women, to perform a song.

National from page 3
and seeing his eyes just a little more watery than usual; that’s when it hit me. This was my last time performing with this group at a competition, ever,” says Bessmer. “Being involved in show band really changed my life. I made so many life-lasting friends whom I will never forget, and they pushed me to be not only a better player every day, but they also pushed me to be a better all-around person every day. This group is going to be so hard to say goodbye to because everyone in the group has a special place in my heart,” he adds.

“I think the most memorable moment for me was coming off the stage after our prelims performance and go-

ing into critique and everyone was just in high spirits because everyone knew that we just had one of our best performances we have ever had,” says Ward. “And then hearing the critique judge back up those thoughts and hearing that he agreed with us was amazing as well,” she adds.

Student comments continue along that same vein. “We put it all out there, and I believe that was our best performance of all,” says Wonder. “I had the time of my life traveling to Atlanta with ATSC. Not only did we compete and put on two of our best performances, but we got to go sight-seeing and meet people from all over the country,” Banark says.”

“I’ve picked up on a lot of things by being in ATSC,” he continues. “Thanks to Nathan’s and Katya’s leadership, I think I’ve become a better show choir person. I’d also like to thank all the guys for being the closest things I’ve had to brothers. I will forever remember the laughs and cries we had together as one big group/family. Seniors, you are the reasons why I love doing show choir. Next year is going to be so hard without you guys, but you will never be forgotten.”

ATSC and ATSB members and families returned to Omaha on Sunday, March 26. The competitive season ended on an upbeat note.

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

District Choral Competition a Huge Success



Westside's Warrior Choir performing at the District Choral Competition, where group received a 1+, the highest rating possible at the competition.

Westside's Warrior Choir earned the highest rating possible at the District Music Contest April 20-22.

Doran Johnson said, Warrior Choir has received the top rating of 1+ consistently since 2004. The coveted superior rating means the choir was scored a 1 by each judge. A panel of three judges ranks the large ensembles and the same ballot is used statewide to evaluate choirs.

"The District Music contest is a chance to be evaluated on a standard of excellence rather than in a head-to-head competition among schools," Johnson said.

Westside's Concert Choir competes as two smaller groups – a women's choir and a men's choir – because schools are allowed to bring just one large ensemble to the contest. Westside's two a cappella groups competed, as did 19 soloists, 2 duets and one quartet. One judge ranks these groups.

Of the soloists, three Westside students received recognition as outstanding performers. **Sam Vazzano** was named outstanding performer

while **Nathan Wallace** and **Matthew Kischer** received honorable mention. Each judge selects one outstanding

performance and two honorable mentions in their center. Westside received all three of these awards in its center.

District Competition Results

Each group's performance was rated by one judge.

<ul style="list-style-type: none">Warrior Choir -1+Concert Choir Men-2Concert Choir Women-1Decibelles -1Jazz Choir/Chamber Singers-1Benjamin Brodkey-1Emma Chvala-1Danielle Dircks-1Olivia Robino/Max Goldberg-2Carly Ingraham-1Hannah-Fay Johnson-1Matthew Kischer-1**Haley Petri-1Kaylee Ramaeker-1Olivia Sprague-2Adja Tchapo-1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Zoe Thackray-1Sam Thomas-1Kyle Trivilino, Jonas Turman, Adam Fulbright, Mickey Wilson-1Zane Watanabe-1Nathan Wallace-1**Ian Wear-1Olivia Wing-1Josh Wonder-1Phoebe Yueill/Sam Thomas-1Sam Vazzano-1*Matthew Zimmerman-2
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* Outstanding Performer
**Honorable Mention - Outstanding Performer

Acknowledgments

- The editors of Westside's *Voices* newsletter, Julie & Paul Trivilino, thank:
- Jackie Kroeger for contributing the feature story on the Westside Choral Festival and the Firework Fundraising Story
 - Mary Dircks for contributing the story on ATSC's National Competition in Atlanta, GA
 - Elizabeth Tape, Cathy Haney for the photos for the different stories
 - Maria Akers for Hall of F.A.M.E. donor tracking list

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 - Paul Trivilino Design for generously proving professional design and layout services
- And our sincerest gratitude to Doran Johnson, Greg Woodin, and Denise Millard for their neverending dedication to the ongoing growth of our students as vocalists, team members and upstanding representatives of Westside High School.

Thank You to the 2016 – 2017 Hall of F.A.M.E.* Members (as of 4/5/2017)

Underwriter \$1,500 or more

Leslie Andersen	Scott & Ann Hofmann	Terry & Jackie Kroeger	The Volberding Family –
Angie & John Bekins	John & Chrisi Hughes	The Seline Family	In Memory of Greek Liakos
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Benefactor \$1,000 – \$1,499

Jason & Courtney Hellman	Mike & Julie McMullen	Kay Owen
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Sponsor \$500 – \$999

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Brad & Cindy Hammitt	Andy & Lilian Jacobitz	Kim & Jim Simon	Mary & Michael Wallace
Christine & Bob Harry	Wendi & Scott Kroeger	Patrick & Nina Swanson	

Platinum Record Member \$250 – \$499

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Marty & Sue Barnhart	Cindy & Bruce Goldberg	Paul & Julie Trivilino	Joanna Young Shubart
Deb & Sam Brower	Dan & Julie Hershiser	Katee & Troy Upton	& Andrew Young

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Kathy & Kevin Dinkel			

*Fund for Attaining Musical Excellence.
The names listed above are current as of April 5, 2017. 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.

Join Vocal Music Parents Association Today!

Open to individuals, families and corporations

- Go online to join
- Select your membership level
- Make your tax-deductible contribution
- Enjoy the perks of membership*

<http://www.westsidechoirs.com/hall-of-f.a.m.e..html>

*See website for a list of membership benefits.

From the VMPPA President...

And in the blink of an eye it's over! This year was another fantastic one for the Westside Vocal Music Programs. Multiple students won honors at the All State Festival. One young man, Nathan Wallace, went all the way to the national level! The spring musical, *Zombie Prom*, was amazing. Competition of Excellence and Cabaret were big successes. All of the show choirs received awards at multiple competitions. ATSC earned first place at all regional competitions, and second place at the national competition in Atlanta. These high school students really know how to put their best out there in so many areas. We are fortunate to have the talented and dedicated leadership of **Doran Johnson** and **Greg Woodin**. Not to mention **Denise Millard**, who keeps the whole ship afloat and plays flawlessly for our students.

The time and talent the students AND their parents have put into all the various activities have been paramount to the successes of this year.

Your generous donations of time, talent, and monetary contributions have made it possible for all of us to make these wonderful memories.

It has been awe inspiring to experience the cohesive community of the Westside Vocal Music Programs over the past 12 years. At times a bit too close—remember influenza at the peak of show choir season? The rallying of SI and ATSC choirs AND parents in hopes of beating the snow storm to Minnesota. Unfortunately the weather won. I am sad that this is our family's last season. This has been a wonderful adventure!

I would like to personally thank the other board members, committee chairs, and all the other tireless volunteers. EVERYONE who played a role this year deserves a huge thank you!

Winter won't be as "warm" without you all.

—Wendie and Scott Grogan

VMPPA Board Members

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ATSC Picnic (2017) . . Shannon Hoy
Cabaret Shannon Hoy
& Stephanie Cota
COE . . Nina Swanson & Leneé Petri
Backstage Mike Wilson
Scholarships Sue Barnhart
Equipment Transport . . Brett Thomas

Westside Receives Giger Foundation Grant

A special thank you to the Giger Foundation for the generous grant awarded to the Westside music program. The grant was used to bring guest clinicians to Westside in the 2016-17 school year. The Giger Foundation was established in 1985 to provide charitable grants for musical endeavors and education.



Westside VMPPA Facebook Group for Parents

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1618102114973041/?fref=nf>

Questions/suggestions? Contact
Leneé Petri: leneepetri@cox.net.

Fireworks Sales Volunteering

A great way to give of your time,
meet people, and support
Westside Vocal Music!

Parent and student volunteers needed
to work fireworks sales tent

June 24–July 5.

Sign up online at:

<http://signup.com/go/yVQ2B2>

Contact Leneé Petri at leneepetri@cox.net
or Cathy Haney at shaney1@cox.net
for more information.