

# the Illinois District

association of Chapters / Barbershop Harmony Society



*a state of close harmony*

To: Illinois District Board  
House of Delegates

From: Terry Ludwig  
President, Illinois District

Greetings to all the members of the Illinois District. As we are preparing for another Fall Convention I wanted to take a few moments and share some of the other wonderful opportunities in our District.

On August 27<sup>th</sup>, we are hosting a Chorus Director Class with Joe Cerruti. It is going to be held in Downers Grove and the cost is only \$25! The class is called a Director class, but it is open to anyone. Joe is a wealth of knowledge and will certainly discuss any topic or issue that you or your chorus is having.

February 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> will see the return of Harmony College Midwest with our special guest quartet MIDTOWN. Come spend the day taking some great classes and then spend the evening listening to our current International Champion quartet! Registration will open at the Fall Convention.

In early 2024 we will be having a virtual COTS. Details are being finalized and will be sent out as soon as we have them all ironed out. Be on the lookout.

A quick update on Chapter Visits. The Board continues our quest to visit every chapter in the District this year. We still have a few more to do and are committed to making sure everyone gets a visit. As I am writing this update I believe we have 5 more chapters yet to set a date to visit. We haven't forgotten about you it has just been a massive undertaking. Thank you to all of my Board Members who have help visit these chapters. At the end of my report you will find summaries from all the chapter visits we have done since the Spring HOD.

Let's talk about our Fall Convention. I can't wait to see everyone in Bloomington in September. We have been spreading the word about all the fun new things happening at this convention and we hope you will join us. Here is a list of what to expect:

- Sing With A Champ: This fun event is making it's return this year. Come join a bunch of our former District Champion quartet singers and sing a song or a tag with any of them you choose. It is a great way to sing with some of the people you have looked up to for years! This takes place Saturday morning at 9:30 am
- Illinois District Barber Pole Cat Program: Just like the old Society program just run here in our very own District. When you first join the program you will get a pin that was specifically designed for us so that you can brag to everyone that you are part of this new program. All you need to do is show up Saturday morning between 9:30 and 11:30 and sing 1 (or more) of the polecats from the polecat 1 book from memory. Once you have completed all of them you will get a 2<sup>nd</sup> pin. You DO NOT have to do all of them at this convention! We will run this program for multiple conventions so do a couple each year! You do not have to come with a quartet as we will have people there to fill in whatever part or parts you need. So come by yourself or come with friends, either is perfectly fine!
- SMAG Fest: Saturday Morning Anything Goes! Just as the name implies...ANYTHING GOES. Solos, duets, trios, quartets...more... singing or other??? There will be some "judges" who will pick a winner. Rumor has it they may be able to be bribed! Come enjoy the fun on Saturday morning at 10:30 am.
- Barbershop Dance Card: At registration you will receive a "Dance Card" with 12 lines on it. All you need to do is sing a tag or a song with 4 different 4-somes and have the others sign your card. Once you get 12 different signatures you will turn the card in at the Presidents Reception/QCA show for the chance to win a fabulous prize!
- 2 Classes: On Saturday morning we will be offering 2 different class for those who wish to attend. The first class is "Grant Writing and Building a Culture of Philanthropy in your Chapter." This class will be at 9:30 am. The second class is "Organizing a Multi-Chapter Show" and this class will be at 10:30. Both those are working titles at the time of this writing.

The other big change is that the Chorus Contest will be Saturday afternoon and the Quartet Finals will be Saturday night. It is shaping up to be a really entertaining contest session!

I hope that you can see we are trying to bring the SINGING back to our Convention. We want the weekend to be more than just some contest sessions. We want to get back to why we all joined BHS in the first place...THE SINGING!

Respectfully Submitted,

Terry Ludwig  
President

Chapter visit summaries to follow-

Coles County Chapter Visit  
July 18, 2023

On Tuesday, July 18<sup>th</sup> I have the pleasure of visiting the Coles County Chapter. They had about 20 singers in attendance and the average age was around 60 with a number of guys below the age of 50. This is a healthy chapter and very plugged into the District since they currently have 3 Board Members in their ranks including Doug Finkbiner, Jeff Bowyer and Leif Wildman. I was joined on my visit by our District Historian Rich Hansen.

The night started off with some work on "Down Our Way." They are spending some time each week looking at the Polecats. They sang through it and then did a little bit of section work and came back and sang it again.

After the polecat they ran a couple rep songs and then into their contest tunes. Tim Woodall put them through their paces and the chorus is really sounding great!

After a short break I talked with the chorus about the upcoming convention, the Director School, the CSLT event after the first of the year, Harmony College Midwest and then reminded them that the Board is always willing to listen and help. We work for them! I opened it up for questions and there were a few, but nothing too out of the ordinary.

At the end of rehearsal I met with their Board and emphasized the fact that we are there to help. I thanked them for supporting the District and look forward to seeing them this fall.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Terry Ludwig

Rockford Chapter Visit  
7/31/23

On Monday, July 31<sup>st</sup> I visited the Rockford Chapter. I wanted to make this visit personally because of some concerns that their Director, Nicole Adams, had raised with Carrie Marcotte. I thought it was important to show her and the chapter that we are listening and that we care.

The meeting consisted of 16 singers and the director. The average age was about 60 with a nice mix of young and old. The youngest being 17! They are a mixed chapter. They started with a short warm-up and then sang through a couple songs as they waited for a full complement of singers to arrive.

After a few songs I was asked to talk to the Chapter. My intent was to have a short discussion about what is going on in the District and that we are there to work for them. As you will see, this turned into a lengthy question and answer. We started with these topics:

Fall Convention  
HCMW  
Chorus Director Class  
Chapter Officer Training

After the normal discussion I opened it up for questions. They had many comments and concerns.

- 1) Communication. Seems that they don't seem to get all the info from the District that they desire. We talked about the ways the District communicates and some of the challenges. We also try to come up with a couple of solutions that they can try at the Chapter level. I did assure them that we are working on the issues and should have them addressed shortly.
- 2) Contest. The chapter had a bad experience at contest a few years ago and have been hesitant about returning. We talked about all the great NON contest things that are going to happen this year. I also told them that there are other ways they could participate in the Convention without having to worry about a score. I even offered an option of mic testing for the chorus contest. They seem interested in coming this fall.
- 3) They have felt neglected by the District and BHS. They were very appreciative that someone came and showed some interest in what is going on in Rockford.
- 4) Questions about BHS/HFI. For a chapter that has not really been plugged into the District they really seem to be very plugged into what is going on.

This small chapter is doing some really good things and seem to be struggling a little in some areas. I assured them that we are here to help. It was a pleasure to share the evening with them.

Respectfully Submitted  
Terry Ludwig, President

Springfield Chapter Visit  
7/25/23

I had the pleasure of visiting the Springfield Chapter on Tuesday, July 25<sup>th</sup>. Rehearsal started at 7pm with 20 singers in attendance and an average age of about 60. After a warm-up they did a tag and had a couple quartets come out front and sing that tag.

They are lead by Patrick Claussen and I cannot say enough good things about him. He is incredibly organized and is very clear with the chorus about what they are going to work on. A very good director!

After some work on their contest songs I was asked to address the Chapter. We discussed a number of topics including:

- Fall Convention and all of the changes
- HCMW
- Director School in August
- Chapter Officer Training

I then fielded questions. Nothing too out of the ordinary. They are pretty plugged into what goes on in the District.

All in all a very enjoyable evening with my friends from Springfield. They are doing a lot of things right. The Chapter leadership is strong and they have good musical leadership. They face the same problems as most chapters and that is membership. President, John Rigg, and I are going to get together in the coming weeks to discuss a few ideas.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Terry Ludwig, President

I had the pleasure of meeting with the Chorus of DuPage on May 16th in Naperville.

It was great to see almost their entire rehearsal space full. They had 28 in attendance, and mentioned that they were missing 10-12 guys. At this time Raymond Schwarzkopf and Tom Kentish are tag-teaming the director responsibilities.

The chorus is all about having fun while making little changes and paying attention to the small things to improve. It was evident to me that night that the members have really grasped that mentality.

Their average age is 75 years old, but have started seeing some interest from younger (40-50s) guys. They do quite a bit of community performances and they contribute those events to the recent interest.

The members expressed a clear interest in attending the fall convention, as well as competing. They were very excited to hear that there will be more singing happening at the convention (especially the SMAG Fest). Their only suggestion for future conventions would be to have singing opportunities or classes available on Friday afternoon for those who may be interested.

Their annual Brat Bash is being held on June 13th (their 46th year!). The chorus will be creating a Facebook event and will make the District a contributor so we can share it.

At this time, the only request COD had was for the District to continue to be transparent with what is going on and why things may be changing. They love being apart of the Illinois District and are excited for the future.

Thanks,  
Ben Dirks  
ILL District EVP



Mike Isely and I had the opportunity to visit Chicago Metro's rehearsal on June 28th. They were very welcoming and appreciative of the board's effort to visit every chapter.

The average age of the chorus is approximately 75. This night in particular they had 12 members in attendance. They were only missing about 3-4. Chicago Metro is very focused on providing entertainment within their communities. Although they don't participate a lot in district events, they are aware of what is going on and appreciates our support.

There was talk of them possibly having a mixed quartet register for contest.

Thanks,  
Ben and Mike

June 22, 2023

Ben and Carrie visited

15 members + 1 director (missing a few people)

Average age: between 12 and 80+?

1. This chorus has an energetic director and enthusiastic members. For 15 members, they sang with a really good sound. They sing a lot of polecats, but they also have a book of "Lamplighters" songs. They are a fairly localized chorus- singing in parades and at community events. They don't have much interaction with other choruses beyond the combined chapter holiday show, but they are very open to combined regional events.
2. Their main concern is growth. They are frustrated because they WANT to grow. They have tried ideas that they have read in The Harmonizer, but have found no success. They asked what help the district could provide. They are open to a Youth in Harmony festival but do not have the resources to host one themselves. They would be happy to combine with another chapter for such an event. They are also open to becoming a mixed chorus. Before the pandemic, they had 3 female singers who did not return afterward.
3. Ben asked them what their identity is. He shared some ideas from his mother's Sweet Adelines chorus. He encouraged them to utilize social media.
4. We spoke to them about convention changes. They are not interested in singing as a chorus, not even for eval only, but individuals may attend. Some individuals have attended in the past, as well.
5. Carrie spoke to them about the director workshop and their director has the date on his calendar but has not yet registered.
6. There was a brief discussion about updating leadership contact information. They have updated their info at the BHS member center, but the updated info has somehow not reached our district board.

Side note: a former member of the Kishwaukee chapter sings with this chorus. He has 2 ½ file cabinets worth of barbershop sheet music in storage. He has asked area high schools and colleges if they want it, but got no response. Carrie wondered if it could be brought to the convention for choruses and/or quartets to get "free music." She will follow up to see what their files are and if it would be worth bringing them to the convention.

Elgin Chapter Visit  
June 26, 2023

Carrie visited

14 members + 1 director (missing 1 member)

Average age: between 60-80+?

1. The Fox Valley Singers are a mixed barbershop chorus. They meet on Monday afternoons at 1 pm which makes it difficult to recruit new members, but this did not seem to be of great concern to them. The “vibe” of this group is a group of seniors who enjoy singing together, laughing, and joking around.
2. I didn't hear too much about performances, but they do have a cabaret coming up on August 27th. From what I could gather, their performing is usually in the form of a combined concert such as the multi-chorus holiday show.
3. Because their cabaret is the same date as the director class, they will not be attending.
4. I spoke to them about convention changes. Their director, John, said he “really likes what they are hearing and seeing from the district.”

John, along with other chorus members, shared lots of ideas regarding the fall convention.

- John has attended the Beatles convention and wishes ours could have multiple choices for people, even during contest time like at the Beatles convention. They have a main stage, a second stage, a market place, etc. He said when he joined BHS in 2001, there used to be 20 quartets competing in IL and he got bored sometimes and wished there were other offerings he could do if he wanted to take a break from hearing the contests.
- Another suggestion was a “swap meet.” One guy has 25 straw hats that he'd like to offer to anyone who would like them. Choruses could bring props and /or costumes or memorabilia that others might want. Especially memorabilia. One member said, “when we die, our widows don't want all of our barbershop stuff.” Lol.
- Another suggestion came from a guy who used to attend the convention years ago. He said they used to teach a song at the convention. He remembers learning In My Room at his first convention.

With all of these singing opportunities at this year's convention, it did raise a question in my (Carrie's) mind: will choruses have a time and a location to have a morning rehearsal before the 1 pm contest?