



Director's Guide to Working with Youth

Special thanks to the following for their contributions: Natalie Allen, Joan Boutilier, Jennifer Cooke, Gail Jencik, Lori Lyford, Dede Nibler, Tori Postma, Kim Wonders, Beth Watkins, and Sandy Wright

*Please note that the SingUnited Youth Outreach program is **NOT** to be considered a recruitment tool. However, should your outreach be successful in establishing youth interested in becoming members, then this resource may be beneficial to your chorus director, so that your chorus may create an environment where youth feel welcome and accepted. This content was originally created in 2014 with the intention of providing valuable insights, guidance, and relevant information. While much of the content remains rooted in enduring principles, it is important to note that some of the data, examples, and recommendations may no longer be relevant. Therefore, you are encouraged to seek out additional resources as needed.*

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Foreword

Directors have many responsibilities and decisions to make on a weekly, monthly and yearly basis. We have musical and administrative teams to assist us, but our members usually look to us for guidance. One lesson we learn early as directors is that we can't please everyone and must try to do what we can for "the good of the chorus." Along with our week-to-week planning, a significant portion of our time is spent thinking about our interactions with our members, how to help them succeed, and how to communicate effectively with them. Very little in our leadership role is black and white; most of the time we deal in shades of grey. In order to relate to our members, we try to put ourselves in their shoes, being empathetic to each individual's situation, but also being careful to safeguard our chorus chosen path of sustaining and growing together. Decisions are easier to make when we can identify, on some level, with our members and their lives.

Directors are also — consciously or otherwise — a major determining factor in chorus culture and identity. Director personality and state of mind can vastly affect the way in which a chorus views music choices, incoming members, personal interaction, and rehearsal time. Sweet Adelines choruses continue to be mini "melting pots," bringing together women with different backgrounds, careers, and personal tastes, who all share a love of barbershop music.

What happens when someone steps into our rehearsal hall with whom we share little in common, someone who wants to sing, appreciates singing four-part harmony, likes us and our leadership, but has a difficult time fitting into our "once-a-week, look-like-this, sing-this-music" setting? This is what may happen when a young singer comes into our settled chorus world. They often come into the chorus community with fresh ideas, unlimited enthusiasm, and varying opinions on music, choreography, and costuming. They may impact many different aspects of chorus culture. We celebrate when someone young is attracted to us, but sometimes we don't know how to communicate with them and make the necessary adjustments to accommodate the younger generation. Being prepared and informed about youth membership allows the director to channel the energy of younger members in a positive manner, allowing them to flourish as contributing chorus members.

This *Director's Guide to Working with Youth* will address the varied issues, potential pitfalls, and ultimate rewards in welcoming young women into a Sweet Adelines International chorus. Many directors who are experienced in working with youth have contributed to this guide. They will share how they have successfully learned to work with young treble voices and understand their youthful culture, while helping members, of every age, to find a common ground which will further the development of musicianship and chorus life for all. As life in the world around us changes, so must we gently flex our directing and leadership style. If you're one of those directors fortunate enough to have young women showing interest in your chorus, may the articles which follow be a handy reference for you, offering you practical tips and philosophical food for thought.

Happy Directing!

***“The young do not know enough to be prudent,
and therefore they attempt the impossible — and
achieve it, generation after generation.”***

— **Pearl S. Buck**

Introduction

Here are two perspectives on the same issue, both commonly heard around the Sweet Adelines world:

- ❖ Perspective #1: *"We need some young women in our chorus."*
- ❖ Perspective #2: *"We have a new member, and she's just 17. Her name is Bethany. It's very exciting! Unfortunately, she can't be here all the time. She plays soccer and is active in her church youth group AND she's president of the Math Club at school. She'll probably be gone all summer. She's a camp counselor. Not all of our chorus members are patient about all of this, but she's a lovely girl and a good singer. Naturally, she learns music and choreography in the blink of an eye. THAT doesn't sit well with some of our members either. But, we need younger members! How do we manage all that?"*

Through this guidebook, we hope to shed some light on both of these perspectives – for those looking to attract young members to their choruses and for those working through the joys and challenges younger members bring. Generally speaking, our advice is for you to take these young women into your choruses, embrace them, be flexible and appreciate them while you can!

Many choruses have youth outreach programs. Through these programs young women may seek to join your chorus and then — as some members do — they may choose to stay for a short time or a long time. Regardless of how long they are with you, it's important that they discover a musical place where women of all ages and walks of life are welcome now — and later.

For those of you who haven't done any work specifically with youth, the following scenario details how many young women might find their way into their local Sweet Adelines chorus. Often times, the chorus finds a local high school whose choral teacher is interested in teaching her students barbershop harmony. She contacts you and says:

"I've read your proposal about a one-day workshop for the girls. Will your chorus really run the workshop and put on a show that night for the benefit of our choral program? Can the girls actually be ready for that show in just one day?" You say, *"Absolutely! We've done it before."* And you're off and running.

Your music team sends two youth voiced arrangements and learning media (which may be subsidized by Sweet Adelines International — more on that in the resources section of this guide book) to the teacher, and you all agree on a date one month from today. On week three, a group of you goes to the school to run section rehearsals, and every one of you arrives excited to see how the students are doing with their barbershop songs. Much to your dismay, you discover that the girls haven't a clue about their parts! Yikes! However, after an hour where some are laughing, some are texting, and a few seem to show a total lack of interest, they're off the paper. **How'd that happen?** Well, that's how it rolls.

As your Music Team is leaving the classroom the girls are telling you, *"This is the best thing ever! I totally love it."* **Who knew?**

It's the day of the workshop and the show. You run section rehearsals, teach some choreography and have some stage time. You also give a brief overview of the organization, emphasizing our love of music from every era and the thrill of hearing those chords ring. You ask everyone to wear black, white and something sparkly for the performance. They all look at you as if you've just fallen out of the sky and landed on your head. **Great!!!**

Show time is at 7:30 p.m. and the concert includes your chorus, two quartets and features the girls. You, of course, are ready. You know what you're doing, right? But how will it go with the kids? Will there be an audience? Will they remember any of the choreography? Will they be looking bored and flipping their hair? Will they all show up?

It's 6:29 p.m., and every girl is there with lovely hair, make-up, black and white outfits, and — sparkles everywhere! Last minute stage time is a bit chatty and unfocused, but you're feeling hopeful about the show.

Your chorus opens the show to a school auditorium filled with parents and extended family members armed with video cameras, smart phones and small bouquets of flowers. You receive a fantastic response from the crowd.

Then the girls are on the stage — prepared, polished and singing beautifully. They get a standing ovation after every song. And, they beam. Right then and there all those young women and their families fall in love with Sweet Adelines. Oh! And you raise \$1100 for the school's choral program. **Sweet!**

Fast forward to the next chorus rehearsal. Nine girls from that school and six moms show up. The moms say, *"Well, Ariel, Brittany and Taylor really loved the experience and want to find out how to join. Is that possible?"* And, you make it so. You explain that your chapter dues are half-price for women aged 25 and under (or whatever your specific chorus policy is), and you make a point of saying that you know that school and school activities are their priority. You encourage the moms to join as youth sponsors and have some additional chorus members at the ready to take on that responsibility, if need be. You also have a conversation with your existing chorus explaining that we'll all be making some concessions for these young women so that they can participate in their own way. We do that for everyone, don't we?

Ariel stays through one contest and then leaves. She's very busy and has to work part time. But she'll be back — she promises. Brittany stays for two contests until she leaves for college. She's hoping there's a Sweet Adelines chorus near school. She loves the music and Sweet Adelines. Brittany and one of your oldest members have become friends on Facebook so they can keep in touch. Taylor's going to school locally and is thinking of running for the Management Team next year. She loves being in the front row and is trying to put together a quartet. Two of the moms, Susan and Kathy, joined right after the school concert and are dedicated members who love their "me time."

Your experiences will vary, of course, but the truth remains — we must **all** invest in **our** future by reaching out to young women in our communities. Read on for more about the inherent challenges and joys that accompany these efforts.

Understanding Millennials

Millennials, also known as Generation Y, are generally considered those who were born during the 1980's through the early 2000's. Being aware of Millennials' traits can help you to connect with them, utilize their unique strengths, and bring out the best in each chorus member.

Attention Span

Millennials focus their attention in short bursts, as trained by the 30-minute sitcom or the fast-paced video game. To keep them engaged, we must shift focus about every 15-20 minutes, whether to work on specific notes, a specific vowel, rhythm of a section in a song, or even move to a different song or to an off-riser activity. This age group is easily distracted and expects to be "edutained" when learning new things. For their entire lives, these digital natives have had immediate access to information via the Internet and, therefore, expect immediate results and answers to their questions. They have little tolerance for boredom and non-value added activities. They are most engaged when they are challenged and supported.

Millennials are accustomed to balancing many activities at once, and may seem less committed to the chorus because they are committed to many other activities. This ability to multitask is a great trait of this generation. You can rest assured that these young women can make a significant contribution to the chorus even while being involved in many other activities.

Point of View

Millennials tend to ask the question "why" before they ask "what" or "how" because they want to get right to the point. They want to know if something is worth the investment first rather than diving in just because you tell them it's a good idea. They want to know how they will benefit before going through the motions of the learning process. "What good will this do me?" and "What's in it for me?" are common refrains. They are certainly willing to go through the necessary motions to learn, participate, and grow, but they want to understand the necessity of the activity and likely success rate before they begin. They will expect your feedback, both positive and negative, on their work. Like most of us, they enjoy being told what they are doing well, but as members of the "everybody gets a trophy" generation, they need very consistent encouragement to continue on through adversity.

Many of these young people have been raised by very involved parents who have told them, repeatedly, that they are special. When working with Millennials in our choruses, it's important that we find ways for them to be special in our group. This doesn't mean they want to be coddled. It more often means they want to contribute and be recognized for their contribution. They aren't interested in working their way up to a formal chorus leadership role through ten years of invisible, undistinguished chorus membership. They want to show you what they can do and be acknowledged now. As directors, we must look for opportunities for them to shine. This generation yearns for a sense of belonging. We can provide that sense of belonging for those young singers who are searching for a musical challenge. Learning their part and holding their own often gives them a sense of accomplishment — they feel immediate success, they belong and they feel wanted for their personal contribution. Always remember that often, Millennials want to really be a part of things, not just looking in from the outside with no significant contribution to make.

Communication Style and Using Technology

While your Millennial members may be dynamos with the technical aspects of digital communication — instant messaging, social media, and texting — some of them might struggle with interpersonal communications skills such as face-to-face and phone communication. Some Millennials view email as old-fashioned, and although they have an email account, they will almost never check it. Always warn them face-to-face or via text message if something important is coming their way via email. Millennials want constant communication and aren't overly concerned with hierarchy or rank. They see the world as a web, rather than in straight lines or ladders, and they appreciate open flow of information.

Social media plays a huge role in their daily lives and most young people prefer to communicate electronically — they typically do not make phone calls with their smart phones! If it's not online then they'll likely never look into it, so you can leave the phone number off the membership flyer unless it's a number that is text-friendly (for example, your flyer should say: call or text 123-456-7890). All choruses need to develop professional looking websites and social media pages with easy links to access video and audio, photos and information regarding rehearsal dates, times and locations.

Many Sweet Adelines choruses currently use technology for making learning media available to chorus members. Songs and learning tracks are uploaded to the chorus website and are available for members to download. Many choruses also video record chorus rehearsals and performances using simple devices such as smart phones, tablets or other digital video recorders, upload the video to online hosting sites such as YouTube, and then send the link out to the chorus for members to view and critique. Many find that youth members are great assets in assisting choruses with using this technique as well as others that employ technology or social media.

One youth member commented that she was embarrassed by the unprofessional looking flyers her chorus was using to advertise membership and their annual show. Many of today's youth are very comfortable using computer applications and have developed design and publishing skills from a very young age. One youth member has become the "flyer-maker" for her chorus because she understands what you can create with color, photographs and computerized designs. Another option would be to utilize the various resources available in the Members Only Marketing Center of the international website, to create professionally looking printed collateral such as flyers, brochures and business cards to promote your chorus.

Youth members interviewed for this guide also had many suggestions for membership recruitment and retention. One said, *"We like attention. Emailing a follow-up message or 'friending' us on Facebook after we visit a rehearsal is a great way to get on our radar."* Another suggested that choruses post advertisement flyers where young women socialize — coffee houses, restaurant or bar bathroom stalls, and movie theaters! One more added that college campuses and high schools are where the girls are and an effort made by Sweet Adelines to reach out to students who like to sing does well to plant the seeds of future membership while focusing on introducing them to the fun of singing and ringing chords in the barbershop style.

One of the biggest selling points for Sweet Adelines is that we encourage women who love to sing to join whether or not they can read music. To assist with learning music, we provide learning tracks and it makes all the difference for women who sing well but who don't read music. However, it's important to remember that some newer computers don't have a slot for CDs. In this age, learning tracks must be accessible via downloadable MP3 files. Again, this would be another area where you could take advantage of your youth members experience

using technology and put one of them in charge of loading music files to your website for secure download.

Contributions

Millennials are known for their abilities to multi-task, network, communicate, and use technology. Couple those skills with a healthy self-esteem and a can-do attitude, and you've got a productive chorus member! So how can we put these fantastic skills to work for our choruses? Does your chorus need a Facebook page? Do you need your rehearsals recorded and uploaded to a website? How about new fundraising ideas? Do you need a new contemporary logo and marketing materials? Could you use help spreading the word about your chorus? Typical Millennials could handle these tasks and more without breaking a sweat. Millennials are civic-minded, resourceful, and innovative. Give them a bit of room to run, to make things their own, and to show you what they can do. They certainly can offer a fresh perspective to the way your chorus operates. Maybe you're not ready to have one lead your entire music team or costume committee. But don't be afraid to give them a chance to push your chorus ahead. They might just point out the one thing that really needs to change. With some guidance, structure, and a bit of support on the more challenging interpersonal communication issues, these young women can become loyal chorus members who will benefit our organization for generations to come.

Postscript

When looking at groups of people, we form generalities to help us understand the group as a whole, but as leaders, we must always remember to view our young members as individuals first. This means that while the above information is *generally* true, it certainly won't be true for all members of the Millennial generation.

Incorporating Youth Members Into Your Chorus

When you make a concerted effort to bring young singers into the chorus, you must be sure that your adult members are on board with this campaign. Help your chorus to understand that attracting youth members and retaining seasoned members are not mutually exclusive goals. It may help to prepare your chorus members for potential changes that will come with the addition of youth members.

Youth members of any age need to understand that they are stepping into a hobby with adult expectations. The singer as well as their parent(s)/guardian(s) need to be informed of this, so that everyone involved is fully aware of the chorus' culture as well as the responsibilities and expectations for its members. As the director, you must consider the youth's ability to behave in a mature enough way to fit into this hobby.

Choruses can be concerned about liability where underage girls are concerned. It's imperative to have clearly stated expectations outlined not only for them but also for their parent(s)/guardian(s) to sign off on. Encourage youth members' parent(s)/guardian(s) to attend competitions where travel is incurred, but, in the event that they decide not to accompany their underage daughter, ensure that they sign a waiver stating that they give a designated adult in the chorus "chaperone" status. This person's responsibility is to keep track of the underage youth member, ensure that she knows where to go, what to do, etc. It's a good idea to organize housing for youth members so that they stay together or with their parent(s)/guardian(s). Youth members under the age of 18 should never be housed with adults other than their parent(s)/guardian(s) unless their parent(s)/guardian(s) have agreed to it in writing. It's a good idea to consult local, state and federal laws regarding the development of child protection policies. Once the youth member has reached the legal age of adulthood, the rules for them can be less strict, but it is still a great idea to keep parent(s)/guardian(s) informed, as appropriate.

Members Ages 13 and Younger

The addition of young voices and young attitudes will be a great asset to your chorus. However, as you look at your new members, you see a few that are *very* young. **Yikes!** You have pre-teens on your risers! Our members, at any age, want to feel accepted by the group. That said, our youngest members have their own set of needs and issues that must be considered. If they have successfully completed the audition and membership process, they must truly want to be there. They have made a commitment to the chorus, and the chorus has made a commitment to them. Does this create fear and trembling or do you see the wonderful gift you have been given? It's all in the way you look at these young members. Is your chorus ready for a new generation of singers? Can your chorus members deal with the quirks of a twelve year old? Of course they can, but the acceptance must come from the top. That is you. So director, how do **you** feel about adding young girls to your chorus? Let's step back a little and discuss the addition of pre-teens into an adult chorus.

The Scottsdale Chorus has recently had a wonderful infusion of members under 25, many of whom are fulltime students between the age of 16 and 20. Since I am both the director of Scottsdale and a high school choral teacher with barbershop programs in my school, we have a unique and distinct connection with knowledgeable youth already attracted to barbershop. Certainly not all of our young members have come from my choir program but many have.

I don't allow just any young singer that can pass the audition into the chorus, especially if they are quite young. They must demonstrate a level of decorum and behavior that fits with the established culture of the chorus.

For more information on the parent packet we use, please contact me through our website www.scottsdalechorus.org and I will have the appropriate person send our materials to review.

The positive aspects of having youthful members in the chorus far outweigh any amount of tedious paperwork associated with having them come on board. Again, I know that not all kids are alike, but this has been my experience, as a director, with younger members joining the chorus. They learn music and choreography very quickly. There is an energy and enthusiasm they bring to the chorus and it rubs off on everyone. Even members who were unsure or not completely sold on the idea of singers under the age of 18 becoming members have been won over. Young, female singers tend to have a brighter, purer sound than most adult women.

I believe it has added a buoyancy and sparkle that has enhanced our overall sound. Occasionally, younger singers' voices will stick out, especially if they are placed next to each other or in a prominent, downstage position in the front row. I just remind them to sing wider to add more resonance to their brilliance. Careful attention to voice placement will help to solve issues with this as well. Occasionally, they do need to be reminded not to get excited and push their sound, but don't we all, at one time or another?

— Lori Lyford
Master Director 700
Scottsdale Chorus
Region 21

From a Chorus Director Perspective

- ❖ Is the director willing to work with young girls?
- ❖ Does your chorus have a minimum age for membership? When was that decided? Has it been reconsidered lately? What criteria does your chorus have for youth membership?
- ❖ Defined guidelines for acceptable behavior
- ❖ Sponsors: Must they be parent(s)/guardian(s) or can it be a chorus member who volunteers to sponsor the girl? Consider drafting a contract for the youth member and her parent(s)/guardian(s), sponsor, and chorus so that all guidelines are spelled out and understood up front.
- ❖ Established attendance policy: What is a valid reason for absence?
- ❖ Acceptance of chorus standards
- ❖ A written guide for youth membership
- ❖ A written guide for all members
- ❖ Travel guidelines
- ❖ Is the culture of the chorus open to accepting young girls?
- ❖ Will young girls be accepted as members of this chorus? Are they more than a novelty?
 - Will young members be given the opportunity to succeed? How will help be offered, when needed?
 - Do chorus members understand the needs — such as limited attention span and social needs — of the young girl?
 - Can the chorus accept certain pre-teen attitudes and behavior — moodiness, talkative, slips in behavior, etc. — if it does not jeopardize the success of the chorus?

- Is the director willing to sensitively address issues so that the chorus standards are maintained while understanding the maturity level of the young girl?

Expectations

Expectations established for every chorus member should also apply to youth members, but sensitivity needs to be employed when addressing issues with pre-teens. Some of these issues include:

Behavior

As much as the younger girls will want to be good members, they may not have as much self-control as the adults. The director must:

- ❖ Accept that they are young girls.
- ❖ Realize that they are capable of being contributing members.
- ❖ Know they may complain, roll their eyes, whine and fidget (but so do our adult members, at times).
- ❖ Impress upon the young girls the need for fully participating.
- ❖ Not lower the standards of the chorus for the youth members.

Limitations

Pre-teens have limits that may include:

- ❖ Their attention span may be short unless they feel valued and challenged.
- ❖ Pre-teens are often not physically able to stand on the risers for a full rehearsal. They are young, and their muscles and nerves just will not allow standing for a full, three-hour rehearsal. Allow for brief breaks.
- ❖ Rehearsals need to be active to maintain their concentration and interest. This cuts down on behavior problems.
- ❖ Many of these girls catch a school bus before 7 a.m. They may not be able to stay for a full, three-hour rehearsal. How will you handle their need to leave early?
- ❖ Consider providing a space for them to take a brief homework break. This allows them to get their work done, relax from riser work, and offers them the chance to come back into rehearsal when their assignments are complete.
- ❖ Understand that school, church, and family come first. Homework and many school activities must come first. If they must miss rehearsal because a project is due, be understanding. If the family has an activity, the girl must go with them. She would probably much rather be singing than attend any family event, but she does not always get to choose.

Chorus Acceptance

The director must be the chief cheerleader in fostering a chorus culture that is accepting of the youth member.

- ❖ Be the leader in accepting the young girls as they are. They may wear funky clothes, and their hair may be purple this week, green the next. Who cares? If they come, prepared and ready to sing, just be glad they are there.
- ❖ Discourage negative comments from the more experienced members.
- ❖ Encourage change.
- ❖ Encourage partnering with an experienced member.
- ❖ Provide social time — if you have more than one youth member, make sure they get a little time to be social.
- ❖ Provide opportunities for success:
 - Arrange double quartets for youth members with more experienced singers to help them learn their music.

- Provide quality learning tools. Young singers learn fast and you want them to learn music correctly the first time.
- Arrange pre-rehearsal practice time.

Lastly, be sure to fully explain everything — pre-teens can be very literal!

From the Younger Girl's Perspective

The young singer's obligations to the chorus include:

- ❖ Learn music in the established time frame.
- ❖ Participate in all chorus functions:
- ❖ Make chorus rehearsals/performances a priority.
- ❖ Inform section leader and attendance person in advance of an expected absence.
- ❖ Abide by chorus expectations for behavior and performance guidelines.
- ❖ Exercise riser etiquette.
- ❖ Bring homework to rehearsals and take a homework break, when necessary.
- ❖ Wear school appropriate clothing to rehearsal.
- ❖ Wear the chorus costumes without complaining.
- ❖ Enjoy this opportunity.

Members Ages 14 to 17

One might be led to believe that a student's life is relatively uncomplicated and carefree, compared to the stresses adulthood will present later in life: work, family, homecare, etc. Members who believe this will assume that the students will be able to do everything the more mature member is expected to do.

Today's students often have a full time job being students — writing papers, making presentations, studying for finals, performing in the school play or musical. They have other concerts and conflicts that arise *because* they are students. Many hold one or two jobs in addition to being students. It's important to be aware of youth members' needs. They will try and come as often as they possibly can, some attending every week, without fail. But, at other times, they may need to duck off the risers and finish their math homework and then come back. More than likely they have made an agreement with their parent(s)/ guardian(s) that, in order to be able to be a Sweet Adeline and go to a rehearsal on a school night, they will be responsible about their grades. Trust them to know what would and would not be a time they should miss. If they are in the front row, it's fair to ask that they never miss uptune portions of the night because of their responsibilities to the row. It won't likely happen at every rehearsal, but when youth members do need to leave the risers to attend to schoolwork, you and the chorus members need to understand. Remember, they are not trying to "get out of" anything. Rather, they are trying to "stay in" something — their chorus, which is very important to them — by keeping up at school.

Despite youth members usually possessing more energy than the average chorus member, one of the biggest stamina issues for them can be developing the ability to stand on the risers for two to three hours at a time. When it comes to physical stamina in a rehearsal it's easy to expect that younger members would have as much or more than the average member. Sometimes, though you'll find the opposite! You might have some members who are 75-80 years old that never need to sit down during a three-hour rehearsal, meanwhile in contrast, some teens might seem to be incapable of concealing just how exhausted *they* are.

Understanding the needs of your young singers can be a challenge for chorus directors. Typically, youth members are able to multi-task better than most. No matter how mature youth members may appear at times, they are still under the age of 26 and approach many things from a perspective of limited experience. Their knowledge may be beyond their years, but their experience and ability to respond or react to situations can be limited. They have a need to be involved, to be noticed, and yet we have to try and help them understand that it is not always about them.

A positive approach to filling this need is to ask your youth members to become involved in chorus responsibilities. Ask them to serve on committees or to help with physical warm-ups. Be mindful that — as energetic and enthusiastic youth members can be — if they are still in school, their ability to really be involved with the chorus can be limited. Remind them that their education has to come first and that there will come a time when they can become more involved in the running of the chorus.

Chorus leaders need to be careful with our youth members and not let their enthusiasm for the chorus and their eagerness to get involved and help cloud our judgment. It is our responsibility to help them realize that their commitments to school or work should continue to be their priority. We cannot let youth members become overwhelmed with balancing their chorus life and personal life. As a high school teacher I understand how young people can very easily become “over committed” and I think we have to help them find this balance.

Working with members under age 26 is not a whole lot different than working with members who are 29, 39 or 49 and holding! Being mindful of their needs, of the demands on their life outside of the chorus and the ways in which they can positively contribute to the group — on and off the risers — is a great way to ensure they are having a successful Sweet Adeline experience, at any age.

— Kim Wonders
Master Director
Metro Nashville Chorus
Region 4

When this comes to pass, simply ask the youngsters to look around the risers and observe the other chorus members' energy and then offer a gentle reminder that they are part of the chorus, too. This is usually all it takes for them to get up and give their full energy to the chorus. No matter the student's age, from as young as 10 to someone in their early 20's, be sure they are aware of the expected physical and mental stamina required. If a student is too young to be contributing the whole evening, they are, perhaps, too young to be doing this.

It also helps if you plan rehearsals so that there are a variety of activities that break up the monotony of standing on the risers. These activities vary from choreography work or review, to having a quartet come down off the risers and sing a song for the chorus while the rest of the chorus sits on the risers for a few minutes. Having the chorus stand in sections for quick section work also helps to break the monotony.

Again, the benefits of having talented youth members in your chorus are varied and many. In order for this relationship to be successful you must have thorough, open and honest communication with youth members, their parent(s)/ guardian(s), and your chorus members.

Members Ages 18 to 25

The relatively short span of years between the ages of 18 and 25 is full of change and marks that all-important transition to independence and adulthood. Many young women in this age range start to seek out groups that are accepting, that will allow them to express themselves, and that are fulfilling. Enter Sweet Adelines.

One of the best things about Sweet Adelines is that each chorus can be made up of a vast variety of women, spanning many different age ranges and walks of life. As a director, it can sometimes feel like “herding cats” to help the women in your chorus connect with each other and feel like a vital piece of the chorus' whole.

Young adults are, for the most part, just beginning to discover who they are. Women ages 18 to 25 may be doing any of the following: graduating high school, starting a career, starting a family, studying at a university, or graduating from a university. They frequently have massive demands on their time and are being pulled in many different directions. Many are just learning how to manage their time and balance career, school, and/or family. However, they are also frequently enthusiastic, very quick to learn, willing to pitch in, and addicted to performing!

These young women can be ideal members for a chorus and will hopefully become lifelong members of our amazing organization. But they can also burn out easily, be overwhelmed financially, and not yet know how to prioritize their time. How can we, as chorus directors, help these women have a positive and lasting chorus experience?

Make them feel welcome. This seems like a “no-brainer,” doesn't it? However, a simple chorus rehearsal can be intimidating for young women, even if youth members are already a part of the mix. These young women are learning to embrace independence, but new environments can still be scary territory. Make sure you have a “riser buddy” ready to go who is enthusiastic, cheerful and optimistic. This should be someone who knows a lot about Sweet Adelines, because the young adult will be full of questions!

Be upfront about financial obligations. Money is a big factor for young adults. Many of them are paying rent for the first time, paying their way through school or just learning how to manage their own bank accounts. They need to know how much it costs to be in Sweet Adelines, but they also need to know if you have an Angel Fund, scholarship program or other financial aid that they can use when needed.

Provide a variety of financial options. Brainstorm with your management team or board ahead of time to decide what kind of payment options your chorus can make available to young adult members. Here are options that some choruses in our organization offer to their youth members:

- ❖ Adult members become financial sponsors to help youth members defray initial start-up costs for membership or to sponsor dues for a specified period of time.
- ❖ Youth members establish a chorus “savings account,” in which they pay a little each month with their dues to save up for extra costs, such as costume fees or costs associated with competition.
- ❖ Choruses create a youth fund that provides scholarship funds for youth members.

Your chorus leadership can most likely come up with a variety of options that will assist these young women as they begin to contemplate membership. The financial side of Sweet Adelines can be formidable for young women who are just starting out in life, so presenting a number of different options will help the young adult member fit this hobby into her budget.

Be tolerant of time demands. Young adults frequently have a variety of demands on their time. Many of them are starting out a new career and have little wiggle room when it comes to asking for time off. Others are in the midst of college studies and extracurricular activities. Still others are just beginning to establish a family and may have young children at home. These members may not be able to attend every single chorus performance or coaching session. Having a discussion with a prospective young member about the requirements for your chorus can help them understand the importance of time budgeting in this hobby.

Youth members tend to be extremely fast learners, and your chorus can have options in place to help them keep up when they do have to miss a rehearsal. Many choruses are now starting to post rehearsal recordings (audio and/or video) on their chorus website, so that any member who has to be absent can still be personally responsible for knowing what took place. Other choruses require members to meet with or talk to a section leader after missing a coaching session. Still others have “riser buddies” who will help newer members know what is expected and even record a rehearsal or sectional for that member.

Help your new youth member find balance. Many times, these members have a lot of enthusiasm, they want to jump right in and become a part of the chorus leadership. They want to be on the music team, committees or management team. Most youth members have seemingly endless energy and they want to put that energy to good use. At the same time, since young women are still learning how to effectively manage their time, they can overextend themselves pretty easily. If you have a youth member who is just itching to contribute, here are some ideas to help her get started:

- ❖ Find out where her interest lies (management, musical leadership, etc.) and have her “shadow” a more experienced member who is already in that role. This will allow her to get a feel for the responsibilities involved and connect with a member who can impart wisdom about all things barbershop.
- ❖ Consider opening up a “youth liaison” seat on your management team or board. This would be a spot reserved for a youth member that would allow that member to observe and learn about the inner workings of chorus management. She can also give great input on how to attract more youth members, if that is what your chorus desires.
- ❖ Play to her strengths. Does your chorus want a Facebook page? Need help with electronic communication? Wanting to video record a choreography plan and post it online for the chorus? Maybe your young adult member is just the person to help get these things off the ground.

Be prepared to explain costuming and makeup. The first thing most young girls want to discuss is what they're going to wear! A young woman — or, really, any woman — wants to feel attractive and self-confident while performing, and sometimes the stage makeup and costuming required for a chorus performance can be inexplicable to our younger members. Be prepared to explain why the chorus needs to wear stage makeup and a costume that provides a unit look for all body types. Nothing can turn a youth member off faster than the words, “This is just the way we do it.” Give your young members a history lesson, complete with pictures, about the way our organization has evolved in this area. And be sure to share some of your initial experiences, especially if you joined Sweet Adelines as a young woman yourself. If a young woman can understand the method behind the madness, it will help her feel more comfortable about the process — and, she may have some costume and makeup ideas to contribute! Finally, enjoy them! Having young adult members in the chorus is incredibly challenging and fun. Often times, they will be a breath of fresh air in each chorus rehearsal. Their boundless energy and enthusiasm is contagious! Enjoy everything they bring to the chorus and revel in the fact that you get to play a part in what will hopefully be a long and fulfilling Sweet Adelines experience.

The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

Drama. Youth members thrive on it and hate it all at the same time. Drama is not just a youth problem — it's a human problem. Just as two 45-year-olds might not turn out to be best friends, two 18-year-olds might face the same differences. Youth members are comfortable positioning themselves for popularity and acceptance. Just because you have two or more in your chorus, don't stop recruiting them. Their own insecurities may create the desire to let you know what they know and how much they know. After all, young women are caught between childhood and maturity and they are thrown into a well-established cauldron of "we've *always done it that way.*" So be kind, be gentle, and listen — I mean **really** listen. And even if you've tried it once and it didn't work, maybe this time it **will** work. They might be able to suggest a new way — or a better way. They really have some great ideas — all they need is an ear and an open mind.

Here are some actual statements and thoughts from the younger member's perspective:

- ❖ One youth member said, *"I'll stay as long as there is a strong repertoire and variety in the music. I love choreography, and having a 'big sister' I can come to for anything when I need help. I love contests because it gives me a chance to be on stage and shine."*
- ❖ One youth member confessed that she has not brought any of her friends to visit her chorus because of the make-up they wear, the extreme focus on competition, and the lateness of rehearsals. But she does love the quality of her chorus. *"I love the learning opportunities and the high standards, although I never can attend regional weekends because of work conflicts."* The resistance to change in terms of styles and make-up frustrates her, and she is occasionally frustrated by the repertoire.
- ❖ Another youth member has already been in three different choruses! She joined Sweet Adelines to make friends and perform. *"It's all about the experience of being part of something and feeling like I have a group of friends, sisters, and family of all ages."* Because her first chorus experience was a success, she sought out others as college, and then a career, took her to different cities. It was the enthusiasm of the membership chair and the friendliness of the chorus that created the lasting bond. Still another youth member said that the relationships she has formed have made the difference. *"My chorus comes to my high school concerts, visits me at work, supports my quartets, and has even helped me financially."*
- ❖ One youth member shared that she felt that most choruses move very slowly. *"Some youth members leave because they don't feel challenged."* In college, they are used to spending mere hours learning music. In a Sweet Adelines Chorus it might take weeks or even months. Directors might consider teaching to the level of the members they want to keep. If that includes younger members, move quickly and expect more from all of your members.
- ❖ *"I have felt some jealousy coming from some of the more seasoned members toward the youth members in the chorus,"* said one younger member. *"I was told I could not try out for the front row because there were more 'experienced dancers' there. I personally felt that I worked harder, learned my music faster, and had more 'drive' than most of the women in the chorus. I felt that there was some animosity directed toward me when a coach asked me to demonstrate."* This youth member felt that other youth members probably feel this way, too. *"We are constantly trying to prove ourselves and many don't realize that we have learned everything from our 'more experienced' elders."*

- ❖ One youth member's boyfriend sings with the Westminster Chorus (BHS), and she longs for a young women's chorus like that. *"Young women need to see that Sweet Adelines is super fun and that we sound amazing!"* She also notes that it's a great hobby to meet young men with compatible interests.

Rehearsal Attendance

Some young members may need to skip rehearsal in order to complete homework or to prepare for an exam. Like many new members, they may have been told that joining the chorus would be committing to being available just one night a week — and we all know that tends not to be the case in Sweet Adelines. One high school student interviewed for this guide commented, *"I am up at 5:30 a.m. for a full day of classes, and then to have rehearsal until 10 p.m. it's exhausting, and it has an effect on my schoolwork."*

Another shared, *"My current chorus has an attendance policy which is why I am not active in the chorus right now."* Members from her chorus made her feel guilty that being in the chorus was not her top priority. *"They were unwilling to work with me,"* and added, *"There absolutely needs to be more sensitivity regarding our youth. Many cannot make everything, and shouldn't be expected to do so — especially if they are proving themselves, prepared with their music, choreography and vocal ability."*

Many busy students depend on weekend jobs — often in the hospitality or retail sector — for income. This is a real hardship if coaching sessions, competitions, and music schools interfere with their jobs. If it comes down to choosing between chorus commitments or honoring their work obligations, be supportive of their choice — it shows that these youth members are becoming responsible working adults. Some youth members are also newly married or new mothers, which brings added dimension to their need for balancing their careers, families and chorus life. Providing as much advanced notice about additional commitments beyond rehearsal is crucial. Getting off one night per week is doable — coaching sessions, extra rehearsals and weekend educational schools may be asking our youth members for too much of their time. Establishing more reasonable expectations for their time commitment to the chorus would allow younger members to balance school/work, relationships and their life as a Sweet Adeline. A "guilt-free" chorus environment promotes member retention among all of our member age groups.

Advantages of including youth members to your chorus:

- ❖ Injects new energy into the chorus
- ❖ Gives new perspective to the chorus
- ❖ May grow and enhance the chorus culture
- ❖ Stretches the perceived limits of the chorus
- ❖ Revitalizes long-term, experienced members
- ❖ Can provide a new focus for the chorus
- ❖ Offers a new image for the chorus
- ❖ Provides a new demographic within the chorus and within your fan base

Challenges of including youth members in the chorus:

- ❖ Requires extra effort, energy, rules, as well as safety and financial considerations
- ❖ Comes with teen/pre-teen issues and drama
- ❖ Presents risk of resentment from experienced members
- ❖ Requires chorus to commit to making youth membership work
- ❖ Needs an understanding of youth members' commitment challenges

With a positive attitude about youth membership, directors and chorus leaders can influence the direction of their chorus' membership growth. Often an attitude of exclusivity or distrust of the "younger generation" can lead to an aging chorus membership with no possibilities for the long-term future. If a chorus can agree and look forward to adapting to the future, if they can accept a more youthful approach to costuming and music choices, if they can understand, appreciate and welcome singers who are younger than them, then they can count on securing a vibrant and strong musical future.

Financial Concerns for Youth Members

Financial concerns and obligations can be a big difficulty for youth members. Our hobby is expensive, and students and young women just beginning their careers and/or getting married and starting families, usually have limited incomes and many financial needs. It is not always possible for young women to afford all of the financial requirements to remain in good standing in their choruses.

Reduced Fees

International Dues are one half the cost for young women aged 25 and under. This is a great incentive and help for youth members. Many regions have also elected to cut the regional assessment in half for youth members and students. It is recommended that chapters reduce their dues by 50% for young women under 26. This can make all the difference ensuring that the young woman can remain current in her financial obligations to the chorus. The financial policy for youth members should be part of the chapter's standing rules, and approved by the chorus membership. As in all cases, communication should be clear on all financial issues, with the youth member *and* her adult sponsor. Some choruses have established assistance programs to help fund their youth members' dues. Angel Funds, or in some cases, ways and means projects are sometimes dedicated to helping youth members meet their costs of membership.

Sponsorships

In many cases, the adult sponsor for a youth member is a family member — a mother, grandmother, or aunt — and they are willing to bear the financial burden for the youth member. Expenses are a major reason some youth members leave or never join. Of the youth members who join and stay, the discounted rate for Youth Member dues is greatly appreciated. In cases like this, half-priced dues are very helpful. It might also be rewarding for the sponsor to receive some sort of public acknowledgement or praise from the chorus or chorus leadership. A sponsor or mentor award could be designed to help recognize this extra commitment made by members who volunteer to sponsor youth members and also help to encourage others to volunteer to sponsor youth members.

One young woman interviewed for this guide recently turned 26 and has already been a member for 13 years. *"Sweet Adelines is why I don't have any savings,"* she laughed and added, *"We aren't talking about only dues. We are talking about everything in addition to dues. Costume fees, make-up, transportation, hotels...this all adds up."* Most youth members might be able to afford the monthly fees, but competitions and costumes can really put a strain on an already tight budget. Choruses need to get creative here. Corporations and philanthropists are often eager to support and underwrite youth members' expenses, especially if the sponsoring company or individual receives credit for the gesture. One chorus had a youth member's dad run a sponsorship through his mortgage company — the youth member got her tuition/dues paid and the mortgage company got the credit.

The individual youth member can be encouraged to approach businesses or community leaders in their area to assist with underwriting the costs associated with their chorus membership. The chorus financial chair or marketing chair should have some guidelines and offer suggestions to help youth members learn how to approach possible benefactors in the community. Perhaps they could offer advertising space on the chorus website or on printed collateral materials. Offering some sort of marketing benefit to sponsoring businesses would be appropriate.

Some choruses, as a whole, organize to make appeals to businesses and arts organizations in their communities to help defray specific costs related to providing youth memberships. Many grants are connected with education opportunities in the community, and using grant monies for education in sponsoring membership for youth members might be an appropriate way to request and utilize these types of charitable funds.

Scholarships

Some choruses have set up scholarship funds to assist youth members with paying for some or all of their dues. One chorus has such a scholarship in place; they collect youth member tuition for three months before sending the membership paperwork to international headquarters with their international dues. That way they can ensure that the youth member is sincere in joining and staying, and it spreads out that big chunk they have to come up with in order to join the organization because it has been collected in the waiting time. She is still treated as a full member of the chorus during this time. *(Note: this chorus also does this for adult members who can't come up with that big one-time up-front fee.)*

Other choruses have set up scholarship programs connected with their annual shows or their locally sponsored Youth Festivals. Asking for donations at your annual show to sponsor scholarships is an excellent practice that can be used to provide a year's membership for a promising youth member. Many patrons viewing a fine musical performance would be inclined to donate an extra dollar or extra pocket change for the young women they just witnessed performing with the chorus. If the talent level of the young singers is high enough, they can be featured in a solo or small group situation within the chorus performance. This might also encourage donations to continue supporting the development of those young singers.

One chorus recently asked their audience to "donate a dollar" in addition to the purchase price of the ticket to the annual show. These funds were allocated to their local youth festival, but this idea could easily be adapted to a scholarship program to help fund youth membership. Any fundraiser for the chorus could be adapted to contribute to a fund for youth members — singing valentines, silent auctions, and dinner/cabaret performances can all be used to "tack on a dollar" for a scholarship plan.

Child Care

Some of our younger members may also be mothers of young children and a big deterrent to their maintaining their chorus membership is the need to secure affordable childcare during rehearsal time. Many choruses provide a nursery or childcare during rehearsals. Issues to consider include checking with the rehearsal facility to make sure there is an appropriate place for children to be supervised and that the facility approves of its use for this purpose. Also, insurance needs should be investigated to ensure that proper coverage is extended to the chapter for childcare situations.

Costs for babysitting could be funded by the chorus or the mothers wishing to use the service; or there could be a division or sharing of these costs. In some cases, chorus members have older children willing to take turns providing childcare, so that costs are minimal. Many church groups or scouting organizations have service programs where young girls are looking for opportunities to serve in a capacity like this, to earn a merit badge or award. With a bit of creativity and effort, a good childcare system can be provided to help young moms enjoy the many benefits of chorus membership.

Transportation

Another issue to consider is that some youth members might have real transportation challenges. They may not own a car, even if they have a license to drive. If a parent can't drive them to and from rehearsal, it might be impossible for them to join — even if it would be life changing for the young woman. Assisting members to organize carpools could be a very effective remedy for this challenge.

The Bottom Line

With positive energy and a creative approach to helping youth members financially we can secure our future for many generations to come and continue to harmonize the world!

Vocal Skill Development

There has been a tremendous effort on the part of the Sweet Adelines International to develop a healthy and meaningful vocal program for young female singers. Our organization prizes good singing habits and stresses the need to pass these habits along to our younger singers. Chorus directors must remember that a younger singer's participation and performance may not exactly match that of a more mature member. The joy and enthusiasm that the younger singer brings to the chorus more than compensates for her lighter vocal quality and range limitations.

Youth quartet experiences have opened up a new world for many young girls. There are girls in their formative years who are quite capable of singing and holding their part, performing with confidence, and being an inspiration to others. The opportunities at the regional and international level continue to grow, and young girls are showing the barbershop world that they are ready to make a positive contribution to our society and organization. Many adult members have given time and energy to this program and are to be congratulated for their wisdom in choosing to support and advance this program. Because of this, we will continue to see growth and interest in this area.

Understanding the Developing Female Voice

For this section of the guide, the youth members' ages are grouped into three categories:

- ❖ Pre-Formative Years (up to age 13)
- ❖ Formative Years (13 to 16 years of age)
- ❖ Young Adult (17 to 25 years of age)

It is extremely important that every director understand the developmental phases of a young woman's singing voice, and know what is appropriate to ask and expect of these developing instruments.

The Pre-Formative Years (up to age 13)

Almost every young person, male or female, is a soprano, with a natural, free and light vocal quality. Until puberty, around age 13, a child's vocal folds are approximately 1/2" in length. This is a very small instrument that can make a great deal of noise, as every parent, teacher and grandparent knows. However, unless a child is shouting or screaming, little laryngeal pressure exists; this is a good thing, as an overabundance of laryngeal pressure could create vocal problems for the child. During these early years, the size of the vocal folds remains the same, but they gain in firmness and strength.

Vocal Quality

Many young singers have a light, breathy tone quality as the vocal folds do not cleanly and firmly adduct until a young girl reaches her mid-teens. It is important not to ask young singers to sing with force and great volume to remove breathiness. Rather, young voices need to be allowed to practice and sing lightly for only moderate periods of time. Intonation, tone quality, tuning and blend are all affected by the singer's breathiness, and this might frustrate a director or singing teacher. Adults must constantly remember that the experience is for the child and should be geared with her needs and limitations in mind. A young girl should not be asked to train and/or sing like a mature female singer. We want to give her a satisfying musical experience, which will keep her interested in singing for years.

Unfortunately outside of the Sweet Adeline world, there is a history of damage being done to young voices by demanding too much of them. An example is the Broadway show, *Annie*, where the title role of Annie places great demands on the young female singers that have performed it. The Broadway belt style of singing asks the singer to use her chest voice to sing notes that should be sung in her high-mix voice and head voice. Many young performers have lost their voice because of these demands. Vocal health has been sacrificed at times for the sake of producing a show.

Chest Versus Head Voice

Many young singers come to the choral experience having only used their chest voice for singing and speech, which is another possible reason that Annie sang using her chest voice. She might not have known how to access her head voice. The process of getting young singers to sing in their head voice, making the leap to higher pitches, can be challenging, but a few tried and true approaches are:

- ❖ Humming
- ❖ Bubbling
- ❖ Sirens
- ❖ Vocal play – like a bee buzzing

We strive to encourage the use of the head voice and teach them to bring the head voice quality down into the lower notes. It is very important to not force the chest voice upward (this is true with all but a very few singers of all ages). The head voice is light in quality and free from unnecessary tension. Begin vocal exercises on A or B above middle C – have them hum the pitch and sing the tone in the hum spot. Then, sing the vocal exercise or song. This will discourage the use of the chest voice. If they slide back into the chest voice, point out the differences between the two registers and encourage the singing to remain in her higher, lighter, “girlier” voice. It is an ongoing process.

With singers in this age-range, songs should be pitched high enough for the young female singer to be able to sing it without too many notes extending below middle C. Songs should also not be too complex, have a great range, difficult text, or awkward intervals. Melodies should lie within a comfortable range limit with phrases of reasonable length. Interesting lyrics and rhythms are very appealing to the young singer.

Basic Music Skills

The young pre-formative singer needs guided practice and instruction on basic music skills. She should be afforded many opportunities to sing in her school and her community. The voice of a young girl, in most instances, does not function well without guidance and modeled proper use. A caring and skillful adult singer/musician is needed to instill the following readiness skills:

Beginning Vocal/Music Skills

- ❖ Pitch matching
- ❖ Steady beat
- ❖ Rhythm patterns
- ❖ Fast/slow
- ❖ High/low
- ❖ Loud/soft
- ❖ Call and response
- ❖ Creative movement and musical games
- ❖ Harmony - rounds and partner songs
- ❖ Early two-part songs
- ❖ Perhaps singing a barbershop tag in the key of very high!

Along with early general music instruction, young girls need instruction and encouragement to stand with good posture, breathe correctly, learn music reading skills and develop energy for the task of singing. These basic music skill builders will place the very young singer in a position to learn more advanced skills in her teens and early adulthood.

Voice Parts

Girls in their early years really need to sing soprano to develop the beautiful, light soprano sound. There are very few true altos or lower voices in this age group. Girls might want to sing like and along with their favorite vocal stars, but their vocal folds are not happy when they do. Voice teachers or vocal coaches should not encourage this practice.

The Formative Years (13 to 16 years of age)

Vocal Quality

Between the ages of 13 and 16, a young girl experiences many physical changes. One of the changes, the growth and strengthening of the larynx, allows the young singer to experience expanded vocal ability.

- ❖ The vocal range increases. Young altos can be found as the larynx and vocal folds have lengthened (slightly) and thickened.
- ❖ The vocal timbre gets richer and can produce tones of various colors and textures.
- ❖ The range and the tessitura increase to include pitches higher and lower than previously experienced.
- ❖ Harmony singing, including barbershop harmony, can be very successful.

Range and Voice Parts

The female voice does not change dramatically in a young to mid-teen girl, but it does mature and grow in strength and accuracy. There is no noticeable pitch, range and timbre change as occurs in the young male voice. However, slight changes do actually happen and generally go unnoticed and unidentified by the girl and her voice teacher. The slight changes may cause:

- ❖ Insecurity of pitch
- ❖ Missing notes at times
- ❖ Development of identifiable registers
- ❖ Change in the register breaks/bridges
- ❖ A general uneasiness concerning singing

Subtle vocal changes can actually be more disturbing than obvious changes (as in a young boy's voice) as the female is not certain what is happening to her voice. A young female can be very serious about singing and being a singer, and the slight changes might be just enough to put her off of singing for short periods for time. The music coach/teacher might sense a girl's feeling of slight frustration and needs to treat the situation with patience and much encouragement. This is the period of time when the voice is finding a new home – changing from a light, lyric soprano quality to a deeper, lower and perhaps temporarily, harder to control instrument. A young female singer might feel unsure of her voice on a daily basis – alto today, soprano yesterday and tomorrow. While there are still more changes to come as a young female grows, the good news is, the voice will settle in with some vast improvements over the pre-formative period voice.

A young/mid-teen singer's voice will grow to become less breathy, more stable, more comfortable with certain pitches, and more easily produced. With these changes, a young female singer might be successful singing second soprano or alto. The music teacher should still not place a definite voice part label on a young singer but move each girl from part to part, depending on the requirements of the piece being sung.

The early barbershop harmony experience should be similar. Barbershop harmony needs four definite voice parts, but a girl participating in a youth chorus might change from lead to baritone or tenor to lead, or baritone to bass, depending on the song being performed. The voice part label is not the important thing at this age. The experience of singing four-part harmony successfully is the goal.

When barbershop harmony voice parts are being assigned, there are definite vocal attributes that will assist a director in this job. A young female with a light head voice that possesses a minimum of vibrato will best sing the tenor part. Her range should be solid up to a G or A above the staff as youth music tends to be pitched in keys that demand these notes from a tenor. The tenor part should not automatically be given to a soprano. Some sopranos are better suited as barbershop leads. The lead voice must have the ability to sing in the octave between middle C and the E an octave and two notes above it. The voice needs a certain amount of natural presence and carrying power. The singer should exhibit authority and confidence in her ability to lead the quartet. The baritone is generally a second soprano voice who enjoys singing harmony. The singer must have the ability to sing independently above and below the lead singer. Accuracy and musicality really help with this voice part. The bass is sometimes very hard to find in this age group. Natural basses are few and far between. With few exceptions, young girls do not possess vocal folds that are long and thick enough to produce pitches needed by a bass singer. Girls can be found who, with enough weight and force on their folds, can produce notes down to a low F or E below middle C but there is a certain amount of risk in doing this – vocal abuse can take place. Even though there are exceptions to every rule – this being no different – there are few young females who actually possess the range needed for this voice part. So, what to do about the bass part? One choice is to find a girl who can sing to an A or perhaps a G below middle C and pitch the songs up a note or a note-and-a-half. Most young tenors have the ability to extend upward more easily than a bass downward. As long as the tenor is producing her tones healthily, there is no vocal abuse to her instrument. Another choice is to revoice the chords with extremely low pitches. This does not always make for the best chord voicings, however. For sure, a young bass should never be asked for volume or clarity of tone – the breathy sound is just a product of their development.

Music Education

High school age girls typically have many opportunities to sing in their school and community choirs. Music instructors have a wonderful opportunity to cement healthy vocal habits with these young singers. Posture, breathing techniques, development of a free and open tone quality, development of resonance and clean articulation are just some of the areas for study. Teachers need to refrain from encouraging over-singing for these young singers. The young voice is still in a state of transition and needs to be treated kindly. It is possible and desirable to teach all kinds of vocal music, including barbershop harmony, without asking for excess force and pressed tones in vocal production. It is possible and desirable to create full and vital vocal sounds through resonance development rather than through excess volume.

Singing barbershop harmony can be a very positive addition to many young singers' lives. Besides introducing the girl to a new musical genre, there are also the elements of friendship, common goals, shared fun and contentment.

Training the Voice

The choral teacher or barbershop chorus director must be able to function as a group voice teacher. Chances are, young singers have not received much concentrated instruction on the art of singing well.

The director must understand:

- ❖ Vocal pedagogy
- ❖ Vocal development stages
- ❖ Limitations of the voice

The question is – are we committed to the vocal development of the young singer or are we primarily interested in the teaching of the song? Thankfully, with knowledge and preparation, it is possible to do both at the same time. A background in vocal music is necessary to instruct any singer; however, the young singer is in her formative years and vocal faults/issues left uncorrected can end up becoming a bad habit for many years. A special kind of teaching is needed for the development of the young voice and the production of a healthy choral tone. The director must have the ability to model and teach good vocal production and pedagogy. Demonstration is one of the most powerful tools for teaching young singers. A great voice is not needed but the ability to hear, evaluate and correct vocal problems as they hear them is paramount. Say, “This is what I hear (demo) and this is what I want (demo).” The best way for a director of young singers to learn skills, both singing and teaching, is to study voice and/or sing in a chorus and/or quartet.

Vocal Development

A portion of every rehearsal should be devoted to vocal development. This is the group voice lesson section of every rehearsal. Voice building exercises can address many of the common issues of singers. These exercises can be and should be used at any time of the rehearsal to bring attention to a vocal production issue that needs to be taught or reinforced. Every rehearsal should begin with a warm-up session. Warm-ups may include any and all of the following:

- ❖ Posture – every rehearsal, every minute – the director must look at the singer as well as listen to them. Constant encouragement is needed.
- ❖ Breathing – the same
- ❖ Tone production or tone quality
- ❖ Intonation and tuning
- ❖ Pronunciation – the common production of vowels and diphthongs
- ❖ Musical elements – history, music reading, etc.

Vocal exercises should help young singers use their voices properly, matching pitches with a tension-free tone that grows more confident and resonant over time. A natural sound at this age is not the sound of a mature woman, nor should it be. An unforced, flowing voice is desired with the singer looking and feeling comfortable. Through vocal warm-ups, the singing ability of the young female can significantly improve. Vocal exercises should include:

- ❖ Step, jump and leap progressions
- ❖ Vowel matching
- ❖ Development of legato and staccato
- ❖ Dynamic intensity without undue pressure
- ❖ Range extension
- ❖ Agility
- ❖ Word play (tongue twisters)

Young Adult (17-25 years of age)

Range and Voice Parts

There is little to no difficulty in finding females in the young adult age group who can fulfill the four voice parts of barbershop music. Their maturing vocal instrument can and will easily cover the ranges needed for all four parts. Although there are few contralto singers in this age group, the young alto is now identifiable. Again, the instructor should be careful when asking for excess volume. In this age group, we find young singers with a wide range of vocal timbres. Some young girls have already developed a maturity that extends to their singing voice. Others still possess a light, high head voice and have not developed a warm, rich, mellow sound. In fact, some never will — they are tenors now and will remain so in the future.

Voice parts in non-barbershop music give some hint of what part a singer should sing for barbershop. As stated, the high, light soprano makes a great tenor. Sopranos and second sopranos with more size to their sound become leads and baritones. Altos, hopefully, will have the range and vocal timbre for the bass part. It is best to listen to each individual voice and note the lack or presence of vocal and physical tension, vibrato, breath support, general lack or presence of energy in the tone and the manner in which sound is produced. This allows the director/vocal coach to make appropriate and correct decisions concerning voice placement. Once a voice part assignment has been made, the director should note the level of success of the singer and make a change to another part, if necessary.

Vocal/Music Education

Ongoing vocal education is critical during these years. This is the time to identify a sequence of vocal instruction and present information and warm-up sessions based on the identified areas of instruction.

The majority of research in this field supports the vocal production sequence identified by the Sweet Adelines International:

- ❖ Posture/body alignment
- ❖ Breathing/breath management
- ❖ Phonation
- ❖ Resonance
- ❖ Articulation

Vocal exercises should emphasize relaxation — or better yet, action without incorporating excess tension — of the entire body and vocal instrument, breath control and management, phonation, resonance, range and articulation. One leads to the next. Without good posture, proper breathing techniques cannot be put in place. Without proper breathing techniques, phonation (pitch onset and tone production) cannot be clear. Without clean, clear phonation, resonance cannot be full. Without resonance, articulation is indistinct and inaccurate. This sequence begins with the big muscles of the body and works down to the very small articulation muscles. Relaxation is key to all steps of the vocal production sequence.

Other areas of vocal study, including tone quality, blend, and intonation, are of equal importance and should be part of the vocal education received by young singers. We know that it is important for the young female to possess a steady, constant supply of air; a relaxed, coordinated set of neck, throat, jaw and facial muscles; and a warm, open and free resonant tone quality.

Training the Voice

The young singers in this age group are eager to learn and are interested in improving their personal performance level. Finding vocal exercises that reinforce the sequence of vocal production and enhance the individual singer's abilities is a huge task. Trial and error with various warm-ups helps the director identify those exercises that get a positive result from the majority of the chorus. Repetition of these identified exercises will help the singers respond and recall the desired vocal activity. Encouragement and communication from the director is most important in cementing the healthy vocal habits we wish our young singers to exhibit.

As with any barbershop chorus, having each part sing alone, then as part of a duet and trio is a wise rehearsal strategy. Through this method, the singer can learn how her part fits with the other voices and enjoys the sound of the harmony produced from each duet and trio. This training will help the four-part chorus have a more successful performance.

Barbershop Style

The time, energy and thought that have been given to the development of the Youth Outreach Program will ensure that Sweet Adelines International has singers and fans of barbershop music for many years to come. The goal of the program was not to have droves of young people in our existing choruses but rather to plant the seed of music education, good singing skills and awareness and appreciation of our craft. If, in the future, these young singers come to us to become chorus or quartet members, it is a huge bonus of this youth outreach program.

The barbershop style allows women of all ages to grow not only musically, but also as women and leaders. We have blossomed and bloomed and continue to do so partially as a result of the ongoing education that is offered to all of us. Our legacy is in place, and through the efforts of many, we will introduce the wonders of four-part harmony to young female singers for many years to come.

Performances

If you are already blessed with youth members in your chorus, you know they might be blunt or unpredictable, sometimes unreliable and usually, very vocal about what they like and don't like. Depending on whether they are students or young professional women, they are nearly always out of time, low on money, or both. But youth members are also some of the finest singers, most accomplished dancers and the most incredibly fearless performers in the chorus. When they are on the risers they are disciplined, pay attention, and soak up every bit of knowledge they can get. They generally prefer fast-moving, highly motivated rehearsals. They are enthusiastic, positive, energetic, and driven toward success. They usually take the time to learn their music outside of rehearsals, come prepared, sing in tune and on pitch, and can grasp every word said by the coach at a coaching session or director at a rehearsal. **They get it!** Sometimes, though, this means they might choose to miss rehearsals for two weeks while they wait for the rest of the chorus to catch up. There is no doubt that a chorus comprised entirely of women age 25 and under, could easily rehearse once a month and complete everything necessary to prepare for a competition or a performance.

Competition

Research and experience tell us that it is 100 percent, beyond-a-shadow-of-a-doubt, absolutely and positively clear that youth members love, love, LOVE competition! Whether it's the Rising Star Quartet Contest, Regional or International Competition, they thrive on the excitement of it, the taste and smell of it, the work that goes into it, the thrill of getting on stage for evaluation, and the determination that follows when they don't achieve their goals. One youth member who replied a survey for this guide is a past Rising Star Quartet Contest participant. She said, *"It was a joy to just be free and have so many different personalities to show off through song. Even though it seemed like hard work, it was still fun to sing with girls my age who just loved to sing."* Another youth member said, *"That was the draw of Sweet Adelines for me!"* She added, *"Competition gave me the opportunity to learn more about the craft I love and strive for something bigger."* Several agreed that competition was a prime motivation for joining Sweet Adelines International. Through competition they feel part of the greater organization and art form. They also love seeing all the different groups and meeting new people at competition. Youth members are part of a small club in most regions. They seek other youth members to hang out with, including boys who are into barbershop harmony. You might consider organizing a youth members-only party for your next regional weekend for all of the youth to gather together and connect. You may even develop a regional youth chorus festival and encourage not only youth members from your region to participate but also invite local young singers from the local community to participate. Who better to introduce the fun and joy of singing barbershop to young singers than your youth members?

It's important to remember that when considering acceptance of any member into your chorus, you need to make sure they are a good fit for the culture of your chorus. This is true of your youth members, as well. If your chapter is more laid back and likes to focus on performing in your community but is really not contest-driven, you need to ensure that your members, including youth, know that your chorus is more recreational. Likewise, if your chorus is very driven and loves to compete, you'll want to ensure that the members who join are aware and committed to meeting the demands and expectations of participating in a competitive chorus. This can avoid a mismatch between the chorus' goals and some of the members' needs.

Costuming Considerations

Advertising professionals spend countless hours studying color combinations, art layouts and designs, and listening to focus groups who will determine the motivation from a first impression to purchase of a product. It's all about the packaging — even before a customer tastes the product, he or she has made a decision based on the outside appearance of the box or can on a store shelf. The importance of packaging your product through your costuming cannot be stressed enough — whether it's the competition photo on the home page of your website or the way you look when you sing a local performance in the park — many times it comes to the costume making or breaking the deal with young women — or, truthfully, women of all ages.

In surveying youth members from large and small choruses for this guide, there was a mix of opinions in regard to costuming. It is safe to assume, however, that a chorus with several youth members is doing well appealing to their sense of style. Some young women may come into your chorus with visible tattoos, pierced body parts and hair colors not found in nature. But, just as we would not prohibit a woman with hair fried from chemotherapy or prevent a morbidly obese lady from singing in our choruses — we have no right to exclude youth members because they look different than us.

One responder to our survey said, *“Our new costumes are much more modern and less horrifying, but our old ones were scary. My friends actually saw my costume in the back seat of my car and started laughing at how ridiculous it was. And it was. Just horrible.”* Another commented, *“I absolutely loved the red sequined jackets we wore for our most recent concert. I know they may seem a little dorky, but they do a great job of unifying the choir.”*

Another youth member replied, *“It's really important to have outfits that are flattering on all body types. Asymmetrical hems add visual interest. The garment should be tight enough to show that we're women but loose enough to slide over curves.”* Another youth member stated that she feels that there are still choruses that have costumes from 20 years ago or that are, at least, of that style: *“Come into this decade, sequins and blue eye shadow are not cool.”*

One of the youth members admitted that she almost didn't visit the chorus in her hometown. The chorus' website wasn't very attractive at all. She recalls, *“There were pictures of women who didn't look like me, dressed in frumpy velour pantsuits, and the word 'barbershop' was all over the site.”* Thanks to a YouTube search, she then discovered a video of UNDERAGE quartet — she saw young women her age, wearing cute costumes. They were entertaining and fun to watch. *“I've always been frustrated by Sweet Adelines' costumes,” she admitted. “I understand that not everyone has the same body type, but I hate how most costumes cover up everything and look baggy.”* We look so unapproachable when we're all buttoned up and covered up. No other form of costuming (except a choir robe) shuts off an audience like the lack of skin showing. She said she did not feel attractive in her first chorus' costumes and actually considered dropping out of a group because of the outfits they chose. Most respondents agreed that singers lose confidence when they feel that they look cheesy, corny, or frumpy. I would say this is probably true for singers of all ages. When you look good, you feel good and when you feel good, you perform to your best ability.

Young members recommend a good compromise between the style and colors she likes to wear and something that flatters most body types. They especially like the “different-but-alike” variety of costumes that provide options for those members who choose not to wear baggy pants and long-sleeves.

A word about all-in-ones:

"I hate to say it," said one youth member, "but there are many youth members that don't need to wear an all-in-one. One chorus I was in insisted that I have an all-in-one under my costume even though it was a large jacket and velveteen pants. Why the extra cost?" She added, "I hate to be negative, but this is where I think the voice of a youth member could really help. It's amazing how interested our youth is in fashion these days, and it could help change the look of Sweet Adelines." It couldn't hurt the image either.

Your costume is your packaging. Before you open your mouths to sing, the audience has made a "purchasing decision" based on your outward appearance. Take a look at your chorus with fresh eyes. What does your costume say about who you are? What does your costume say about who you want to be?

Hair Styles

While most of our youth members seem to like the hair and make-up experience, including loud colors and glitter, there are some concerns. All members of our chorus want to feel that they look pretty and in style when they take the stage. Sometimes we do things to make youth members look older for the sake of the "unit." This is not only unfair, but it is wrong. One member performed in her first regional contest at age 12. *"I had to wear a wig because I did not know how to do my hair so it was poufy enough."* What a self-esteem disaster for this young 12-year-old! She didn't look like herself, and she was humiliated by it. Another added that, *"Hair should be out of your face – but teased? Up? Wigs? Come on! Why do we have to look old? Can't it just be off the face?"* Another offered that people have different face shapes and that personal style should be reflected in hairstyles: *"My chorus understands personal preference,"* she said.

Most felt that their hair was one of their best features, but after teasing and hair spraying, or piling it up on top of their head they did not feel pretty — they felt old and ugly. The news anchors or the stars on the red carpet events such as the Golden Globes and Academy Awards wear unteased, gently curled or pulled back hair. More flashy performers such as The Rockettes, have a very unified yet modern look that has evolved since their founding in 1925.

Some Sweet Adelines create a performance look that still reflects the style from the 1980's. Today's youth want to emulate the current styles that they see in movies, on television and the Internet.

Make-up

When asked about wearing false eyelashes and red lipstick, the youth members surveyed for this guide gave mixed reviews. Some really liked putting on false eyelashes and thought the concept of stage make-up was fun. Their concern was that the foundation was too dark and gave an "over-tanned" look. One commented, *"Everyone has a different skin tone. A dark foundation can look like too much make-up on a pale person."*

Members, of all generations, need to understand the purpose of wearing stage make-up, including false eyelashes and bright red lipstick so they can develop a true appreciation for the reasons behind needing to apply it. It's important to remember that the majority of members will not have much experience with wearing full, stage makeup, let alone applying it for themselves! Asking youth members to participate on your makeup team could serve your chorus well. The younger members can assist with applying makeup to other members who may feel challenged; this can be particularly helpful with the application of liquid eyeliner, for example. More importantly, it creates some "buy in" on their part to commit to using a deeper-toned foundation, brighter lipstick and heavier eye makeup than she may be accustomed to wearing.

Finding ways to involve your youth members in areas of chorus leadership helps them to feel included in the greater good of the chapter. One youth member said, “*younger members need more of a reason — beyond making music — to be interested.*” She said, “*I personally love the fact that there is always a place for me in the chorus.*”

Another idea is to pair a seasoned youth member with newer youth members when it comes to prepping their makeup for the first few performances. It's a good idea to ask members to adjust their stage makeup application depending upon your chorus' performance venue — the level of intensity needed for a large stage with bright lights is very different from what is needed for a local performance in the community.

Stage makeup should always enhance the individual performers facial structure. It should also reflect the overall look of the costuming decisions. Of less importance is that each woman wears the exact same shade or brand of lipstick, foundation or eye shadow. If your chorus wants to attract today's contemporary, modern woman to join as a member, it's important to ensure that the look of your chorus and its individual members — at any age — reflects a modern and contemporary image.

Repertoire Considerations

The music you select reflects the chorus' personality, and each chorus clearly shows this to the audiences through performances and to its membership at rehearsals. In discussions with youth members, variety seemed to be the key ingredient. Youth members appreciate when their choruses mix new music with older songs and strike a balance between songs of yesterday and more current pop songs that are relatable. One youth member said, “*I think it would be good to start adopting arrangements of some more contemporary music. Barbershop arrangements of Disney songs or more contemporary Broadway shows would be more relatable for younger people.*” In the eyes of many youth members, singing popular and/or more contemporary music is definitely preferable to more traditional songs. They come to love square barbershop, but a chorus must have a few modern songs in its repertoire. They feel that young people need to be “hooked” on fun stuff, and then they will stay to learn about the art form. At the end of the day we all know that good singing and good music is what keeps our members coming back. You really can't go wrong with selecting Broadway music. It's usually a winner for everyone, at any age.

In addition to showcasing a variety of eras and musical styles in song repertoire, youth members also like to sing a variety of songs during rehearsal. One summed up her feelings on the topic: “*Don't repeat your competition set forever. We get bored pretty fast unless there is*

As someone who was once the youngest member in my own chorus, I was pleased to be asked to contribute to this *Director's Guide to Working with Youth* because I remember how I felt at that time. I also know that young women are happy to give their ideas as long as real changes might come out of it. So I offer this in that spirit and hope we all learn something from the opinions and ideas these young women were willing to share.

Through Facebook, I sought the thoughts and impressions of youth members outside my own sphere of influence. The women interviewed are all real members of Sweet Adelines International between the ages of 14 and 26. None of the respondents are members of my chorus and because some of them did not want to offend their choruses or the leadership of our international organization, I promised anonymity.

Throughout this guide, where you see quotes and ideas from young members, know that they are active chorus members in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom. Some are former members or have left a chorus to become Chapter-at-Large. Some joined as youth members and are now slightly past their magic 26th birthday. In each case, their thoughts and feelings are honest, candid and blunt. We have much to learn if we listen.

— Sandi Wright
Master Director
St. Louis Harmony Chorus
Region 5

a constant movement of songs in and out of the repertoire.” Don’t forget, that this is the “fast food generation.” While it’s important to work deeply through the parts of each song, the rehearsal pace should not drag or stagnate. Of course, this is true for both older and younger members! It’s ideal to work intensely for 20-minutes per song and change it up to keep them engaged. Having a rehearsal plan that includes sectionals, quartetting or smaller ensemble singing helps to break the monotony of everyone singing together on the risers all evening.

Choreography

Dancing — it’s what young women do! Choreography was the reason some women joined Sweet Adelines choruses rather than traditional choirs in their communities. Youth members, in particular, learn very quickly and can be quite fearless in front of an audience. Many of our members under the age of 26 join Sweet Adelines International after having great experiences in their high school show choirs. The fact that we sing *and* dance is the main reason they join. As with costuming, makeup and repertoire decisions, choreography should reflect the image of your chorus. Modern movement and gesture reflecting popular dance trends is preferable over choreographed moves that can feel overly “cheesy” or “corny.” Today’s young woman is influenced by hit TV shows such as *Glee*, *The Sing-Off* and *Smash* and movies such as *Pitch Perfect*. They’ve also grown up seeing movie remakes of classic Broadway musicals such as *Chicago* and new Broadway hits like *High School Musical*. Many probably spent some time in high school or college performing in community or school-based musical theater productions and they bring their expectations from those experiences to their membership in Sweet Adelines.

Chaperones

If you have members younger than the age of legal adulthood for your country, you’ll need to ensure that you have a policy in place regarding chaperones. This could include parent or guardian signed permission slips or pairing each underage member with an adult member who has agreed to look after them. This is for the protection of the youngest members as well as for the organization, as a whole. When traveling as a chorus with youth members, a responsible adult for every 10 women under the age of 18 is a good idea. This can be a parent of the youth member or a volunteer from within the chorus. Rarely does a parent send a child to a performance or competition without staying to watch. Many youth members join the organization without a parent or family member being a Sweet Adeline. In that case, providing the parents a pair of free show tickets is a great way to get the parent emotionally and financially involved. In some cases, young women join, and then her mom, aunt or grandma joins after seeing her perform.

Time Away From Home for Competition and Educational Weekends

Although most youth members love to get away with their sisters in song, it is an issue of concern for some, especially busy high school or college students who have to miss classes or young mothers with very small children. Timing is everything and most youth members have more time away from school during the summer months, which enable them to fully participate in Sweet Adelines International’s activities. Some said that they really wish more competitions could happen over the summer months because more young girls who are in school would be able to attend. Another shared that *“International competition takes me out of school for a week. One day is hard enough. A week is horrible as I am taking advanced placement classes.”* Youth members are also not as seasoned and comfortable traveling alone, so a travel buddy for members between the ages of 18 and 25 is helpful and a chaperone for those under 18 is required — especially if a plane flight and hotel stay is involved.

Many of the youth members interviewed thought it was hard to stay motivated when there weren't any other women their age at competition or education events. "I did kind of feel out of the loop being so young," one said. "I didn't see many women my age." If youth members see other girls their age, they're more likely to attend these events. One member, who belongs to two choruses, loves that there is a Youth Outreach program and suggests that organizing meet-and-greet parties at regional and international events early on in the weekend is important for providing them with the opportunity to meet each other and hang out.

Summary

...or the Millennial version of this section:

Performance	What Youth Members Want
Costuming considerations	Keep it contemporary. Youth members don't want to look "frumpy."
Hair	They want to feel pretty and look in-style. They feel Sweet Adelines' judging system rewards the 1980's look.
Make-Up	They want to feel pretty and glamorous. They don't want to be over-done.
Repertoire Considerations	They love a variety of old and new. Broadway songs are always a hit.
Choreography	They love to dance. They don't like disconnected "moves" that are inauthentic and that have no tie to the meaning of the song's story.
Competition	They LOVE competition! They LOVE to perform! Did I say they LOVE competition?
Sponsors/Chaperones *	They feel adequately supervised and outnumbered by adults. A "big sister" or "riser buddy" is great.
Costs	If a family member isn't paying, it's a really serious problem.
Time Away from Home	School, jobs, relationships and life beyond chorus-related events can take top priority. But, when they are able to get away from the demands of daily life and fully participate in the chorus, they LOVE it.

* If the youth member is not legally considered an adult, then a parent/guardian or sponsor from the chorus should be responsible to look after them for liability reasons.

Conclusion

Sweet Adelines International established its youth outreach in 1990 for the purpose of reaching out to young women through the American musical art form of barbershop harmony. Its goal is to provide educational and performance opportunities and to offer music educators a means of including the study and performance of barbershop harmony in school music programs. Since its inception, thousands of young women have discovered the joy and fun of singing and ringing chords in four-part harmony, barbershop style. In those ensuing years, many, many of these young women have joined Sweet Adeline choruses and quartets all across the world. Attracting young singers to become members will ensure that we not only survive, but also thrive in the 21st century.

It is very much to our advantage that singing and making music together transcends the test of time. We're currently in a cultural paradigm where singing in an a cappella ensemble is cool again — thanks to hit television shows like *Glee* and *The Sing-Off* and movies like *Pitch Perfect*. This is the perfect moment to make a concerted effort — members, chapters, quartets and regions — to spread the word about Sweet Adelines International to today's youth. We must leverage the fact that there are women of every generation who wish to sing, dance, laugh, perform, entertain and have a chance to grow into the star she's destined to be. As we know, Sweet Adelines can change lives for the better. It gives thousands of women worldwide a place to shine, to express herself and to be fully accepted among friends. One youth member said that she invites her friends to visit her chorus because the group appeals to a younger market and *"accepts us the way we are."* The key here is acceptance. If your chorus still has an age limit and you want to attract youth members, you must change it immediately. Choruses wanting to include youth need to value young people's opinions. Established choruses must be willing to change and consider new ways outside of the *"way we've always done it."*

We must do everything in our power, as leaders of the organization, to not only perpetuate the art form but to also welcome, with open hearts and arms, singers from Generation Y — the Millennials. To do this successfully, we not only need to understand their worldview and accept it, but we must embrace it and actively weave it into the fabric of our organization's culture. We must be open to giving up a little bit of "the way we've always done it" to reap the rewards of gaining new, talented, excited and passionate members who will keep Sweet Adelines International moving forward into the future. We should celebrate our diversity and look forward to the continued growth of our organization. Youth members are our future and the lifeblood of our organization. We need them and they need us. It's a perfect match.

Resources

The international organization provides many tools and resources related to the Youth Outreach and youth membership. Please visit the Youth Section of the members' only Education Center. There you will find links to the *Youth Guide for Chapters*. It is free to download and is filled with helpful information for your chorus leadership to use in their effort to establish youth outreach programs in your area. You may also wish to request a complimentary *Educator's Kit*, which offers tips and techniques teaching barbershop harmony to young singers.

In the Document Center on our website you will find the *Chapter Guide*. In it there are Youth Member forms that you can use to develop bylaws for your chapter regarding youth membership. Additionally, there are various liability and release forms to use with singers under the age of 18.

Finally, in addition to all of our published music, you can review charts arranged specifically for youth on our sales site.

The education department staff at international headquarters is available to assist you with your youth outreach; they can be reached via email: education@singunited.org. For questions pertaining to Youth Membership, please contact the Membership Department at membership@singunited.org.