

Jason Dyer fell in love with barbershop harmony thanks to the Placerville chapter's Youth In Harmony efforts. He's now the chapter's associate director, and the chapter is paying his way to Harmony University this year. One of six young men who belong to the chapter, the 20-year-old plans to get a Ph.D. in music while studying under Dr. Jim Henry.

Doing the Youth In Harmony Two-Step!

It's easier than you think to get the attention of educators and young singers

It is really easy to start a chapter Youth In Harmony (YIH) program—the **Placerville, Calif.** Chapter has found you can do it in two easy steps. These two steps recognize that music educators have three big needs for their vocal music programs: (1) More public exposure, (2) more money, (3) more students involved. This two-step process gets the educator's attention by filling the first two needs right off the bat.

Step 1: Make your *very first* contact with a music educator be an offer to showcase their main choir in a 12-minute segment at your chapter's next concert, and you'll pay them a \$350 performance fee. Do a little research in advance to locate a high school with a good vocal program. Don't use this conversation to tell music educators about the advantages of including barbershop harmony in their choral programs—soon enough, they'll see the advantages on their own. *All you need to do is present what many music educators consider a pretty attractive offer: A local public performance, needed cash for their program, and very little extra work for them.*

Step 1 includes a few critical elements that make a big difference:

- During the initial contact, explain that you'd like their choir to participate in a mass song with your group as the concert's grand finale, and that you'll need to schedule two visits by your director to teach them one barbershop song.
- Schedule the school choir early in your concert, then seat them in the auditorium for the rest of the show. Between their early number and the

finale, students will get to hear a lot of barbershop harmony. (Bonus: Many of their parents will likely come to watch their kids on your show. That means both a bigger audience and more ticket sales, which will likely offset the cost of the school's performance fee and then some.)

- Ensure they hear a lot of *high-quality* barbershop harmony by inviting a quality guest quartet as headliner, in addition to good chapter and local quartets. Ask all performing quartets to engage students in singing tags after the show. (Most would do this without being invited, but ask them anyway!) *See it—Hear it—Sing it.* That's what sells barbershop.
- Plan to deliver the \$350 check a short time later during the school choir's rehearsal. Ask the principal to be there. School newspaper reporters and photographers are welcome too.

How much work is that for your chapter? All you've done is pay a teacher and some students to sing and to listen to barbershop. They'll be happy you asked, and even happier once they've done it.

Step 2: Oops, actually there is no Step 2. The young singers and music educators will take it from here.

Congratulations, you now have a successful chapter YIH program! If there is a Step 2, it's to simply repeat Step 1 with different schools that have good choral programs. Then watch what happens in the intervening weeks. Assuming the music educator had a positive experience with your chapter's contact and director, and assuming you put on a quality show for the stu-



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dents, your results may be similar to the Placerville Chapter's results:

- Don't be surprised when the music educator calls you because some students want to start a barbershop quartet and they need help.
- Don't be surprised if some students show up at a rehearsal to ask if they can sing with you.
- Don't be surprised if the music educator calls to see if they can be on your show in the future.

Selfish reasons for taking a selfless approach

Many chapters that don't already have a YIH program ask: *Why should we do this?* We've all heard that *someone* needs to be singing barbershop when we're gone, and that's absolutely true. But a YIH program's benefits are not all for the kids, and they're not all down the road—there are great current-day reasons to have a youth program:

- When teens show up at a chapter meeting they bring "electricity" with them.

Running a successful Youth In Harmony program is not rocket science, and almost any chapter can duplicate Placerville's common-sense approach with a little time and planning. Learn about this and other approaches in the *Youth In Harmony Resource Manual* from the Document Center on www.barbershop.org (Direct link: <http://tinyurl.com/yih-manual>)



Ron Murray (with Forte Four) was the originator of Placerville's YIH approach and continues to direct chapter efforts.

- When teens join a quartet, it encourages other students, both boys and girls, to get involved in singing and the school choirs gain members. The music educators really like this part.
- When teens get enthused about barbershop, they start looking into careers in music.
- When teens bring barbershop home, their parents get excited that hip-hop fades as it takes a back seat to a house full of teens singing four-part harmony.
- When teens get involved in barbershop, their fathers sometimes become barbershoppers.
- It's one thing to *hope* our grandchildren will be singing barbershop harmony. It's another thing to *know the names and faces* of some of the local youth who are committed to perpetuating barbershop harmony long after we're gone! Once you catch the Youth in Harmony bug, you won't be able to stop!

Seven Youth In Harmony myths that need to bite the dust!

Myth: *The Society is diverting resources to youth at the expense of serving established members.*

Fact: Less than 5% of our Society budget has any connection to youth outreach efforts. Most youth outreach is funded by generous donors to Harmony Foundation and Sing Canada Harmony who believe that our future is every bit as important as our present.

Myth: *Teachers don't have time for us.*

Fact: This is only true if what you do creates additional work for them. The trick is knowing how music educators want to be approached—knowing how to ensure your chapter is viewed as a *resource* to lighten their load, increase their funds, or help them get more kids excited about singing. They always have time for that!

Myth: *It's hard to develop a Youth in Harmony program.*

Fact: Chapters that follow the principles outlined in the *Youth in Harmony Resource Manual*, which shows how to approach educators and design programs, are amazed how quickly and easily a successful Youth in Harmony program can evolve. Once started, your YIH program can be as big or small as you want it to be.

Myth: *Youth in Harmony involves BIG events, and we don't have the resources.*

Fact: YIH *can* involve big events, but it doesn't have to. If it does, funding and clinicians are available to assist you, thanks to generous donors to Harmony Foundation and Sing Canada Harmony.

Myth: *Our chapter has enough challenges already—we don't need one more thing to do.*

Fact: If you don't think about your future, you will always have challenges. Many chapters report that starting a YIH program has given members a meaningful common purpose, which has in turned strengthened their cohesion, retention and recruiting.

Myth: *Youth won't join our chapter, so there's no point in having a program.*

Fact: Most youth *shouldn't* join your chapter—they're too busy! Between school, friends, a job, homework, sports, plays, concerts, etc., you're not there to give them one more thing to do. Plant the "barbershop bug," and it will impact these youth now and in the future. Which brings us to the most puzzling myth of all ...

Myth: *The focus on youth as "our future" distracts from urgent needs the Society is facing right now.*

Fact: Yes, YIH is a "cathedral building" mentality and not a recruiting program, but look no further than the stats in Rick Spencer's keynote address on pages 15-16 to see how past YIH efforts are impacting our Society *now!* Beyond raw numbers, do you realize younger barbershoppers are already some of the Society's high-impact leaders? Past and current collegiate competitors not only dominate our quartetting ranks, they're beginning to dominate our choral directing ranks—many Society chapters are led by men who are a product of relatively recent YIH efforts. That's primarily men from collegiate quartets—the higher numbers now joining youth choruses may one day have a bigger impact. We already see the momentum building from past efforts, but we can only build on past successes with the time and financial resources of more established barbershoppers.

If that's not a meaningful impact for less than 5% of our resources, e-mail me and tell me what could have more impact. I challenge you!

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A giving mindset changes lives

The Placerville chapter started our YIH program a dozen years ago with the technique outlined in this article. Now the whole chapter has caught the YIH bug, and giving back to youth is one of the most satisfying and sustaining aspects of chapter life. One thing has led to another, with results over the last 12 years that include:

- \$53,000 donated to youth vocal music programs.
- 18,000 youth have heard our 30-minute school program that shares this unique American art form.
- We paid 1/3 of a music educator's salary to introduce a music program at a local grade school.
- We've provided major financial and personnel support for an annual Youth Harmony Camp.
- Two years in a row, both a men's and women's quartet sponsored by our chapter has competed in international collegiate competition.
- We supported many other boys and girls youth quartets in other levels of competition.
- A youth chorus that we sponsor has competed in



THE STUDENTS BECOME THE TEACHERS. You'll find no better examples than Elizabeth Randolph and Jason Dyer. Elizabeth fell in love with barbershop harmony the day she saw Placerville's presentation in her sixth-grade class. Her passion for barbershop has inspired her to pursue a music education degree, she is now serving as Placerville's assistant director, and they're sending her to Harmony University this year. Elizabeth also owns an international medal as a Sweet Adelines Rising Star. Her ambition is to someday lead a men's chorus to international gold and to win international gold as a Sweet Adeline on all four voice parts!

As for Jason, well, you can see the extent of the Placerville associate director's ambitions in the caption on page 12. But here's the fun part: Elizabeth and Jason later met at a barbershop event, and they're getting married this August. Imagine the length of the barbershop shadow they'll cast as music educators—and as parents—over their lifetimes. They both found the two loves of their lives thanks to a smallish chapter that cared enough to look outside themselves and pass the torch of harmony to another generation. How cool is that?

the Youth Chorus Contest at Midwinter.

- Two chapter shows each year feature both school choirs and youth quartets.



GIVING BACK TO TEACHERS WHO GIVE BACK. Mark Bidelman (center) of Soquel High School was one of three teachers honored this year by the Far Western District. On the left is principal Ken Lawrence-Emanuel and on the right is Gold Standard Chorus representative Jerry Orloff holding pictures of chorus activities, while surrounded by a chorus class. Included with the award was a \$250 check for the school's music department. Bidelman's active support of barbershop among youth includes six consecutive years directing the Soquel Concert Choir in the Gold Standard Chorus-sponsored Sing for Your Life annual school benefit concert. He has also coached student quartets and sent his students to Youth Harmony Camp.

- Currently, six youth members belong to the chapter.
- Our Student Intern Director program is training youth to be directors. The first two graduates are now our Associate Chorus Director and an Assistant Chorus Director. A third student has just been accepted as an intern.
- Five teens from our program have chosen music education careers as a direct result—imagine the impact they'll make in their lifetimes!
- Two fathers joined our chapter because their teens got involved in barbershop.

In Placerville, teens are not waiting 25 years to get involved in barbershop harmony. ■