

The Pitch Piper

78 Years of Barbershop Harmony

Over 714,089 Square Miles

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A Bulletin for Barbershoppers in the LO'L District

January-February 2026



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Pitch Piper

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Land O' Lakes Chapters are in North Dakota, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Western Michigan Upper Peninsula, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Western Ontario, Canada.

Office of Publication

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Chapter Support Report

Submitted by Jim Rasmus, VP of Chapter Support
Email: pjras20@gmail.com; Phone/Text: (920) 973-0010

As we begin 2026, let's look back at the past year and forward to the future with regard to the District's focus on Chapter Support and Development.

Here's the Land O'Lakes Grants programs report for 2025. Eight Chapter Show Grants were awarded totaling \$5,650 to bring District Quartets to sing on their shows. Thirteen Chapters received \$11,220 for Chapter Development Grants designed to increase their membership. Seven of those grants, totaling \$5,220, were devoted to sending leaders to the 2025 Leadership Training Academy. Eight Chapters received the new 2026 District Harmony Academy grants totaling \$3,199. We won't know how many Chapters took advantage of the 2 free registrations offered until the DHA.

Looking ahead to 2026, we will shift from two regions to serving our Chapters in THREE DIVISIONS. The goal of this change is to put resources closer to our Chapters and encourage inter-chapter cooperation. We've recruited MENTORS to help connect you with helpful resources to grow your Chapter. The new Division looks like this:

DIVISION	MENTOR
Central Division	Arv Zenk, VP
Dunn County	Nate Weimer
Faribault	Zachary Rolfs
Greater St. Paul	Zachary Rolfs
Hilltop	Jay Althof
LaCrosse	Ryan Robbert
LeRoy	Ryan Robbert
Mankato	Gary Schmidt
Minneapolis	Judd Orff
Polk County	Judd Orff
St. Croix Valley	Nate Weimer
Windom	Gary Schmidt

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Appleton	Jonah Jaeger
Delta County	Larry Lewis
Green Bay	Bill Schmitt
Greendale	Mike Lietke (FH)
	Brian Lynch (MVE)
Lake Geneva	Jim Rasmus
Madison	Bryan Ziegler
Manitowoc	Michael Ziegler
Menomonee Falls	Rick Van Gomple
Milwaukee	Derek Balke?
Oshkosh	Jonah Jaeger
Racine	Steven Joyal
Rock Valley	#
Stevens Point	Matthew Hornbuckle
West Allis	Steven Joyal

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Duluth-Superior	Brent Gerber
Fargo-Moorhead	Brent Gerber
Fergus Falls	Gordon Moe
St Cloud	Adam Helgeson
Thunder Bay	Gordon Billows
Western ND	Mark McLaurin
Willmar	Bob Starz
Winnipeg	Gordon Billows

HAPPY NEW YEAR!
It's GREAT to be a Barbershopper in the LO'LI!

2026 Land O' Lakes Harmony Academy

Submitted by Brian Schultz

Every year the Land O' Lakes District hosts a special event in early January for Chapter Officers and other interested chapter members. This started many years ago as COTS (Chapter Officer Training School) and transitioned to LTA (Leadership Training Academy). For 2026, a new title (Harmony Academy) was introduced to emphasize that classes and activities are for all barbershoppers, not just chapter leaders and officers.

The LO'L District Board encouraged chapters to send members to Harmony Academy by offering two complimentary registrations for each chapter. The Board also allowed chapters to apply for grants which covered registration fees of four additional members, plus a \$250 stipend for hotel and mileage costs. The result was 145 people participating in this year's event with attendees from 25 of the 35 chapters in the Land O' Lakes District.

In addition to several LO'L District members, this year's Harmony Academy faculty featured:

- Bob Cox, a BHS volunteer and long-time barbershopper from the Evergreen District.
- Scott Kvigne, director of the City of Lakes Chorus from 2009-2024 who currently serves as the artistic director of Mixed Company, a mixed-voice a cappella chorus.
- Peter Benson, director of the Great Northern Union Chorus from 2002 to 2014 and a coach for many choruses and quartets around the country.

Besides core classes for Chapter Presidents, Secretaries, and Treasurers, the 2026 Harmony Academy offered new ideas & discussion topics for Chorus Directors & Assistant Directors, Membership VPs & Music/Performance VPs.

A few of the relevant elective classes available to all attendees were:

- Recruiting and Supporting NextGen Singers
- Vocal Production and Ensemble Singing
- Making Rehearsals a Highlight of the Week
- Supporting Senior Singers
- Telling the Story Using Vocal & Musical Skills

Other Harmony Academy activities included time for tag singing, learning the Sea Shanty medley as a group, and Friday night's afterglow with more singing and pizza.



2026 Land O' Lakes Harmony Academy

(continued)

A new feature this year was Harmony on the River, a NextGen music festival that was held all day Friday at the same location. Seventy high school students from Minnesota and Wisconsin attended this event. Schools that were represented included: Amery and Luck in Wisconsin and Byron, Lakeville North, Red Wing, and Zumbrota from Minnesota. The singers were split into bass and treble voices with a clinician and teaching quartet instructing each group. Bass voices were assisted by Scott Perau and the Kordal Kombat quartet, while treble voices worked with Natalie Berdahl and the Elevator Music quartet. Each group learned two songs, plus one for the mass choir. The day culminated with a performance of all five songs which was enjoyed by Harmony Academy participants. There were many positive comments from those who watched and heard the NextGen singers. It was clear the students really enjoyed the day, and their final performance was full of excitement and positive energy. Plans are being made to hold another NextGen festival in January 2027.

Here are a few general comments/highlights from 2026 LO'L Harmony Academy participants:

- Classes were very useful and informative.
- A great opportunity to learn new things and share ideas.
- A gathering of barbershoppers from across the District learning from each other and having fun doing so.
- All instructors did an excellent job.
- Everyone learning a Sea Shanty medley on Friday evening was a highlight.
- I really enjoyed watching the NextGen groups perform and feeling their positive energy.
- The Friday night afterglow was a "blast."
- It has become like a mini-convention.
- I can't wait for next year's Harmony Academy!

The 2026 Land O' Lakes Harmony Academy was a very successful event, and I hope even more chapter members in our district will be able to attend next year.



2026 Harmony on the River Youth Festival

Submitted by Steve Osero

On January 9th the LOL hosted its first Harmony on the River Festival as part of the Leadership Academy weekend at UW-River Falls. Six schools brought 70 high school aged students to experience that Barbershop Harmony we all love. Registration started at 8:30am and concluded with a performance at 4:15pm. It was a full day for everyone but very well received by all. At the show, the Bass Chorus sang *The Lion Sleeps Tonight* and *This Little Light of Mine / Do Lord Medley*. The Treble Chorus sang *Rock Around the Clock* and *I Will Follow Him*. Both teaching quartets entertained us with a few songs, and then the Bass and Treble chorus wrapped up the show with a combined number of *Lida Rose / Will I Ever Tell you*. The audience was made up of the barbershoppers attending the 2026 Leadership Academy, the Music Educators who brought the students, and of course the parents of these amazing young men and women.

Many thank yous go out to Natalie Berdahl and Scott Perau our clinicians, and to Elevator Music and Kordal Kombat, our teaching quartets. We were delighted to have Bob Cox MC the event, and he did an amazing job.

This event wouldn't have come together if not for an amazing behind the scenes team, the support of the LOL District, SAI and Region Six, BHS, and many individuals and choruses who donated time, resources, and financial support.

Planning has already begun on next year's event! If you would be interested in donating to future events, please reach out to Steve Osero for more information. (715) 554-1492, sosero@performance-molding.com

With Many Thanks,
The Harmony on the River Leadership Team



Carry Your Part

By Walt Ogburn and Jim Otto
St. Croix Valley Chapter – Croix Chordsmen Chorus

In January, we led a workshop at Harmony Academy titled *Identifying and Developing Leaders*. Our goal was simple: explore practical ways chapters can share the workload more effectively, drawing on our corporate experience and, more importantly, the real-world experiences of chapter leaders in the room.

It didn't take long to discover a shared reality. Nearly every chapter struggles with the same challenge: finding enough willing volunteers to do the work required to keep a chapter healthy and growing. While the details differ, the frustrations usually fall into one of three categories:

- **Small chapters** where everyone needs to help, but the same four or five people end up doing most of the work.
- **Larger, long-established chapters**, where many members feel they've "paid their dues" and would prefer to focus on singing and fellowship.
- **Growing chapters with new members**, where enthusiasm is high, but leaders struggle to match people's skills and interests with the tasks that need to be done.

There's no magic formula to fix this overnight. However, the workshop surfaced several approaches that consistently help chapters tap into more energy, talent, and engagement.

Start Small and Specific

People are far more willing to volunteer when the commitment is clear and limited. Look for tasks that are small, short-term, or occasional. These provide easy entry points for members who might hesitate to accept a large or undefined role.

Focus on What Energizes People

To build a thriving chapter, we must develop a culture of understanding what drives and energizes our members beyond the risers. Since we spend six days and 20 hours a week between rehearsals, we should learn what our members love doing during that time. If we identify what people love doing outside of the chapter, we can offer them opportunities to find that same fulfillment while supporting the chorus.

Author and speaker Marcus Buckingham reminds us that people bring their best effort when they are doing work that plays to their strengths. If you know what a member loves doing outside the chapter, you can often find chapter work that gives them the same sense of satisfaction. Gallup's StrengthsFinder research reinforces this idea: people grow faster and contribute more when they spend time doing what they love doing.

Assign Someone to Discover Passions

Depending on the size of your chapter, identify one or two people whose role is simply to get to know members better. Look for someone who enjoys conversation and building relationships. Their task isn't to recruit volunteers, but to listen and learn.

Casual, one-on-one conversations work best. Start with open-ended questions such as:

- What do you find yourself doing during the week that you really enjoy, even though it has nothing to do with the chapter?
- Can you think of a time when you were so engaged in a project that you lost track of time? What were you doing?
- Do you prefer working independently, or collaborating with others?

Carry Your Part

(continued)

Listen carefully. The answers often point directly to what drives a person. Some are energized by solving problems. Others by creating something new, building relationships, organizing details, or improving systems.

Match Energy to Opportunity

Once you understand what energizes a member, invite them to help with a task or project that aligns with that passion. When people feel their contribution fits who they are, volunteering stops feeling like an obligation and starts feeling rewarding.

Carry Your Part

We ended our workshop by singing Keep the Whole World Singing. Afterwards, we asked the group what phrase is repeated most often in that song. The answer came quickly: “carry your part.”

At first, everyone thought of voice parts. But with a little reflection, it became clear that the phrase applies just as much to chapter life. Every successful chapter depends on members carrying their part — not just musically, but through time, talent, and effort.

Whether you’re a chapter leader or a newer singer, you can help build this culture:

1. Identify what you love doing and consider how it might support your chapter.
2. Share that insight with your leaders and encourage similar conversations with others.
3. Get curious about your fellow members and learn what energizes them beyond ringing chords.

You may be surprised by what you discover — and by how much lighter the load becomes when everyone truly carries their part.

West Central Connection 2026 Youth in Harmony Festival

Submitted by Gregg Tangeman, YIH Coordinator, West Central Connection Chorus

The West Central Connection Chorus, Willmar, Minnesota, will be hosting its 16th annual Youth in Harmony Festival. Over 60 boys have already registered for this one-day event, representing eight area schools and homeschoolers.

This year's clinician will be Adam Helgeson with former LO'L District Champion, Kordal Kombat as our coaching quartet.



The festival will be held Saturday, February 7, at Willmar Senior High School. The boys will arrive at noon, rehearse in the afternoon ending with a free concert in the evening.

The boys will be performing three songs.

"Believer." This song of persevering through pain will be the most challenging of the three. The boys will gain a feeling of pride and accomplishment when they perform it on the show.

"It's All Right." This song is a good lesson in syncopation and artistic impression.

"Shine On Me." The Barbershop classic. Perfect for boys who want an easy song to sing in a quartet.

The festival is free for the boys. Their only expense is transportation to and from the festival. All other expenses are covered by revenue from West Central Connection's spring show and the generous donations from sponsoring businesses.

Barbershop Quartet Day

Submitted by Mark Wegner

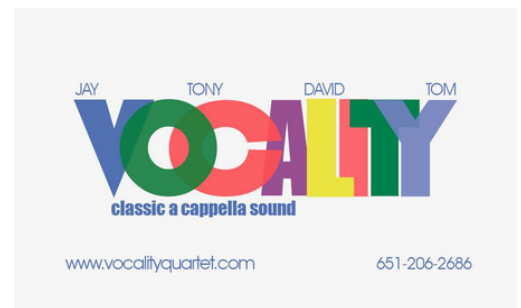
The Faribault Lakelanders are hosting our second Barbershop Quartet Day celebration!

Saturday, April 11, 2026, 4-8pm
The Grand Event Center
316 Washington St. Northfield, MN

Quartets from the area are invited to join us for an evening of fun and fellowship. Last year's event welcomed nine quartets, and we're excited to continue building connections within our local barbershop community.



Quartets



ADC Scholarships Available

Did you know that the Association of District Champions has scholarships available for quartets or individuals?

Scholarships for what, you ask?
Contact Dave Baxter
(dbaxter9@att.net)

Calendar

March

- 28 Dunn County | Northern Lights
Colfax, WI

April

- 11 St. Croix Valley | Croix Chordsmen
Trinity Lutheran Church, Stillwater, MN
- 11 Fergus Falls | Heart O' Lakes Harmony
The Historic Holmes Theatre, Detroit Lakes, MN
- 12 Fergus Falls | Heart O' Lakes Harmony
Fergus Falls Center for the Arts, Fergus Falls, MN
- Manitowoc | Clipper City Chordsmen
- 17 Franciscan Center for Music Education and
Performance, Manitowoc, WI
- Manitowoc | Clipper City Chordsmen
- 18 Franciscan Center for Music Education and
Performance, Manitowoc, WI
- 25 Appleton | Fox Valleyaires
Xavier Fine Arts Theater, Appleton, WI
- 25 Mankato | Riverblenders
Hosanna Lutheran Church, Mankato, MN

May

- 2 Winnipeg | River City Sound
Prairie Spirit United Church, Winnipeg, Manitoba

September

- Manitowoc | Clipper City Chordsmen
- 19 Franciscan Center for Music Education and
Performance, Manitowoc, WI
- Greater St. Paul | North Star Chorus
- 26 3 p.m. Show: Northern Heights Church, Arden Hills, MN
6:30 p.m. Cabaret: VFW Roseville, MN

December

- Manitowoc | Clipper City Chordsmen
- 19 Franciscan Center for Music Education and
Performance, Manitowoc, WI

For more Information on Chapter Shows, visit:
<https://loldistrict.org/chapter-shows>

Send show registrations to:

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secretary@loldistrict.org

Future District & BHS Conventions

2026	January 9-10	Harmony Academy, UW-River Falls
2026	January 13-18	BHS Midwinter Convention, Pasadena, CA
2026	October 15-18	LOL District Convention, Minneapolis Airport Hilton
2027	October 14-17	LOL District Convention, Location TBD
2028	October 12-15	LOL District Convention, Location TBD