

Heart o' Lakes Harmony Chapter Development Success

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As a culmination of a **year-long focus** on inviting guests to sing with us, we chose to use our Christmas show as an opportunity to have guests join us in preparation and performance. And our results were really incredible. Throughout our 4-week preparation we had 17 different individuals join us at a rehearsal and of those 14 joined on-stage at one of our performances.

We've done these campaigns before with varying degrees of success—some very good, but honestly most with mediocre results. So why was this one different?

It started early in the year when we took a few minutes out of our rehearsals in January to do some **self-analysis**. We looked at our strengths and areas where we had opportunities to grow. We analyzed where our members were coming from as we cover a pretty wide footprint in Minnesota Lakes Country. We looked at our demographic, our average age, etc.

From this analysis, we set 2 clear objectives for the year.

1. We needed to grow the chorus. We typically had between 15 and 20 members at practice and the average age of our members was creeping up there. **We set a goal of 10 new members**, but more than anything we wanted to just have some good guest activity.
2. We made a **goal to perform somewhere—paid or unpaid—every month**. We knew that to generate interest in the chorus and support for our shows, we needed to be seen in public. It's not easy with three main "market areas"—Fergus Falls, Detroit Lakes and Pelican Rapids areas of Minnesota.

We have previously done 2 church performance Sundays per summer where we go to multiple churches on a Sunday Morning and sing—usually 5-8 churches per Sunday. We get on a bus and zip around attempting to time things so we can just go in and sing and get onto the next church. It's a lot of fun. (And we miss the collection plate and the sermon!)

So, this year we decided to do three—one in each of the market areas. And we did one per month. That satisfied June, July and August in our pledge to sing publicly every month. All told I estimate that we sang for over 1,500 people in 19 churches plus a stop at the VA nursing home in Fergus Falls. That's really great exposure for the chorus.

Our planning process also told us that **most all of our current members came to the group through a personal invitation to join**. Others said that some local advertising during the Christmas Chorus push in prior years had piqued their interest.

The chorus members delivered! We had guests almost every week throughout the year. It was nice to see some new faces; many of whom have stayed throughout the year. And that really was the secret to our success in November—the chorus members invited people to join us. And they came. And the members redoubled their efforts in November as they turned out those 17 interested singers.

Other important elements of our campaign:

- We supported our campaign with radio advertising to promote the rehearsals and shows. The District provided a grant to reimburse us for half the cost. Thank you!
- We selected a show repertoire of 7 songs with a good mix of moderately difficult to easy tunes AND provided top quality learning tracks from Choral Tracks. (They are exceptional with part-predominant, part-missing and general mix. We have taken advantage of the annual “membership” and I would encourage every chorus to look into that.)
- We were prepared with music folders and materials to provide information about what was happening during the rehearsals and things leading up to the shows.
- We taught the members how to access the tracks in a members-only shared drive. Technology can be scary and we showed them how to overcome their fears. It took some valuable rehearsal time, but it was worth it.
- Our rehearsals were fast-moving and fun. I tried to keep things to about 1 ½ hours or less.
- We had coffee at the end of the rehearsal and just visited with our new friends. No pressure to join.
- We partnered with a local Sweet Adeline Chorus to present the show. They sang on our show in Pelican Rapids and we sang on theirs in Fargo. It created some variety and lightened the load on the chorus. Great experience for both groups!

But the most exciting part of this campaign is what is happening now. **We have already had 6 of these guys sign up to be members and expect perhaps another 4-5 to also join.** They are having a great time! And what they’ve added to our group in terms of energy, part balance, skill and personality is absolutely priceless.

And the best part is that these new guys all have networks of potential audience members and singers of their own. So, growth in your numbers really does position you for more growth.

There is no magic bullet here. This worked because all of the members pulled together to make it happen. Will it work for us again next year?—maybe not. But I can assure you we will be doing it some form again.

January, 2025

Sample of PR

Heart o' Lakes Harmony Holiday Experience!

Heart o Lakes Harmony men's a Capella chorus will be presenting their annual Christmas Show at Trinity Lutheran Church in Pelican Rapids on December 8th at 3:00 pm. They'll be joined by the Acappella Xpress women's chorus from Fargo, and will also sing on their show on Saturday, December 7th in Fargo. But wait — there's more!

We are welcoming men who love to sing to join us to stack the risers full of harmony! We begin rehearsing for this concert on November 11th at 7 pm and each Monday following at our rehearsal site, Faith Lutheran in Pelican Rapids. The Christmas rehearsals will last about an hour.

It's a great way to check out the experience of singing in a men's chorus with very familiar holiday songs. Music doesn't need to be memorized for the concert, but we want to be prepared. It's not a long-term commitment, just join us for as many rehearsals as you can make during this four-week time frame.

There's nothing quite like experiencing the power of male a Capella music from the middle of the risers. Maybe you have sung in high school or church choir, and you want to get back into it. Maybe you're looking for the opportunity to meet and socialize with men of good character who love to sing. Maybe you just love singing Christmas music. This is a unique opportunity for you to check us out!

Welcome and Sign-Up Sheet

Heart o' Lakes Harmony welcomes you to our Christmas singing experience!

What's it all about? We are preparing for two concerts. One on December 7th in Fargo at First Presbyterian Church where we'll join Acappella Xpress women's chorus from Fargo and then on Sunday the 8th, we'll hold a concert here in Pelican Rapids at Trinity Lutheran Church. Both shows are at 3.

And we would love if you'd join us! Our rehearsals are dedicated to learning 8 songs for the show from now until then. You don't have to attend them all. *You don't have to memorize the music.* Just come and sing with us—we have a lot of fun!

How can I learn the music? During our rehearsal time we'll spend some time in sectionals to give you some extra focused work. And we have exceptional learning tracks. Make sure you share your email and we'll get you added to our shared Google page. At that page you can also access PDF of the music.

What do I need to know about the concerts? You'll need to be at the venue approximately 2 pm and dress for the concerts will be white shirts and black pants. In addition to the two choruses, the shows will feature some quartets and some community singing. The concerts will be free with the opportunity for a free-will offering—so your fans can come and watch you sing with your new friends!

Please share this information with us:

Name: _____ Email: _____ Phone: _____

What voice part do you sing (if you don't know—guess—we'll help you!) _____

How did you hear about this event? _____

Share any questions about this event or our organization:

