

Placerville Chapter YIH Program - Planting the Seed

Ron Murray, Youth In Harmony Vice President, Placerville, CA

1. Established a chapter goal to promote singing and barbershop harmony throughout the schools in the community.
2. Established a budget to fund the YIH activities. 15% of chapter gross income is moved to the YIH fund, now named the Tom Yowell Memorial Youth Fund. We hold a raffle at each of our two annual shows for YIH and pass the hat at each chapter meeting for YIH. We have an annual YIH budget of \$3000.
3. Elevated the YIH job to a Vice President position
4. Initial contact with the Music Educators was to offer assistance in their existing programs.
 - a. Perform for free at their fund raisers, be an usher, help build sets, etc.
 - b. Hire their choir and/or quartets to appear on our shows: \$250 for a choir (4-6 songs), \$100 for each quartet (2 songs). Music of their choice. (This has boosted ticket sales because parents, siblings, relatives, and friends buy tickets.)
 - c. Offer small grants (<\$300) We have paid for air fare to New York, diesel fuel for buses, and barbershop folios of Christmas music.

(Once the teachers understood we were not out to change their program, they willingly began to work with us.)
 - d. Assured the ME's that we are not seeking HS students to join our chapter.
5. When a school agrees to appear on our show we ask that the students learn two songs in barbershop harmony to sing with us as a joint chorus. We provide the music and a director to teach the students. We tend to put the students on near the end of the show so that they can't leave early and therefore hear the whole event. The below quartets appeared on our November 2006 show: left, Bunch of Goofy Guys (BOGG) and right Half n Half. They finished as a mixed octet and received an enthusiastic Standing Ovation.



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6. When grade school and middle school music programs were cut, the high school vocal programs dwindled. We then started a school visitation program to present a *Singing is Fun* theme and used barbershop harmony to demonstrate it.

7. We quickly learned that the children related to HS quartets much more readily than to Senior BBS Quartets. Since we had no HS quartets in our area, we hired quartets from a school 100 miles away. The HS Quartet pictured at the right is JAG (Just Add Girls) from Liberty High School in Brentwood, CA. We used them several times and eventually used their girls quartet Diva 4.



We invited the quartet(s) to a Thursday night Pizza party with our chapter, then put them and their ME in a motel overnight. On Friday we scheduled general assemblies in four schools, two in the morning and two in the afternoon, typically reaching 800 children. The quartet(s) then sang on our Saturday night show. We paid the quartets' travel and meal expenses and their school vocal music program received a payment.

Today we have boys and girls quartets in our high schools and we take both on our school visits. There is no women's barbershop group near us so we support the girls too.

8. Our chapter hosts the annual **Youth Harmony Camp** each September with 65-100 boys attending each year. Music Educators are invited to attend free. A few ME's have participated and were very impressed. Our chapter contributes \$2000 to the camp each year. In the photo Gary Bolles directs the camp chorus.



9. Each year we offer to send one of the local Music Educators to Harmony University. One has accepted so far. Three months after attending she excused her piano player since she has switched to all a cappella now.
10. In 2005 we paid \$5000 of a music educator's salary to add vocal music to a grade school that had no music program. Every child in the school then received weekly vocal music training.

Results

The vocal music programs in the High Schools are now growing and the teachers credit our school visitation programs. One teacher has started her own school visitation program in the schools that feed into her high school.

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Two of the five High Schools in our area now have quartets in their regular program and are using some barbershop music for the choirs. The teachers see the quartets as a major enhancement to their music program. Several of the students in the quartets have told us that the school visitation programs are what got them singing.

A new Music Educator at a third school is only trained for instrumental music, but has been assigned the school choir. Our director helped her plan a vocal music program and has been coaching her on directing. One of her students attended the Youth Harmony Camp and was very impressed.

Years ago one of the teachers sent a student to sing with our chapter for the summer. He is now in an International silver medal quartet, a silver medal youthful chorus, and a gold medal adult chorus.

The father of a girl in a HS quartet joined our chapter as a life member. Both of his daughters have asked to join our chapter. We are pondering this question. Since they both are in college now in music education, we may make them Associate Directors (not members) and assign them each a song from our repertoire.

Our YIH fund currently far exceeds our YIH spending and we will be looking for more opportunities to spread barbershop harmony with our youth.

Barbershop harmony is alive and well in Placerville, CA. The planted seeds are growing.