

The Daily Courier

Monday, June 07, 2010

Column: Prescott choral group hits a real high note

[Jerry Jackson](#)

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Prescott's Song of the Pines crew captured a choral coup in California on April 24. That's the day when the 26-member Sweet Adelines barbershop chorus not only won the Region 21 trophy in Division A (best small chorus of 16-30 singers) after their performance at the Pasadena Civic Auditorium, but also came in third overall by outranking choruses twice their size. And it marked the first time that a small chorus had ever finished that high in the overall rankings.

It was quite an achievement in the local vocal focal arena as the group won out in the competition that included 11 choruses from Arizona, Southern California, West Texas and New Mexico. And, significantly, it earned the group a ticket to represent the region at the International Sweet Adelines Competition this October in Houston, Texas.



Suzy Lobaugh, who directs the Prescott chorus, notes that the road to Pasadena had one really big pothole - a "ton of illness" earlier in the year that sent its members reeling. At least one-third of the membership was consistently missing rehearsals and "when you have only 27 members, those are HUGE numbers!"

The "revolving door of illness continued spinning" until approximately three weeks pre-Pasadena, she recalls, and "our coaches had the difficult job of telling us we needed to rebuild ourselves or prepare for disappointment. Our hopes for success seemed unattainable," she lamented, and "spirits were low."

Instead of giving up the ghost in frustration, though, "we initiated an intense program of duet rehearsals, voice lessons, sectionals and audio/visual taping with immediate feedback," and the effort paid off big time with the aforementioned result in California.

Judi Williams serves as team leader and provides able assistance to Lobaugh, who is in her sixth year as director. Song of the Pines has been around for 47 years and performs for various entities - such as civic organizations, churches and, notably, at the Hassayampa Inn during the annual Christmastime Acker Music Festival.

Lobaugh invites participation among women of all ages, noting that "if you have ever considered singing in a fun-loving, competitive show chorus, now is the perfect time to visit as June kicks off an exciting new season." Rehearsals are every Tuesday evening from 6:30 to 9:30 at the Jack Solomon Harmony Studio at 1945 Commerce Center Circle, Suite C, just off Willow Lake Road in Prescott.

She also notes that later this month - June 25-27 - the Region 21 Summer Camp (Camp Ringing Pines) will take place at the Prescott Resort. Featured then will be a threesome that Lobaugh describes as "the best directors in the world" - Kim Hulbert, Lori Lyford and Pam Pieson - in a summer seminar session that will include such events as a double quartet contest and international showcase. For registration materials or information, call up www.region21.org or - for an overview of Song of the Pines - click on www.sotpchorus.org.

Courtesy photo

Suzy Lobaugh, left, and Judi Williams.