



Dazzle

Trends, Insight & Community Chat

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R RIVAR'S™

Choir Spotlight

Community Spirit

Rivar's believes that strong community ties are part of the fabric of American life. The company has a 23 year history in the small rural community of Albany, Indiana, and many employees not only work there, but live there as well. Giving back to the community is a strong value owner Beth Slusher tries to instill in all Rivar's employees.



With that in mind, in 2007, Rivar's employees decided to forego their annual Christmas gift exchange and do an internal fundraising drive to collect money to donate to an organization called "An Albany Christmas," a local nonprofit organization that provides assistance to needy families. The company matched the employee donated funds dollar for dollar, making their donation the largest in the community.

For 2008, the organizers of "An Albany Christmas" saw an even bigger need for monetary assistance within the community. One young girl was living without hearing aids that were desperately needed. A high school student with Hodgkin's disease needed assistance to pay his medical bills. The organization also saw an influx of families who needed help purchasing food and Christmas gifts for their children. Rivar's employees increased their donation in 2008 to help with this growing community need.

Rivar's encourages everyone to temper success with actions that strengthen relationships and benefit the less fortunate. That's what community spirit is all about!

Be A Headliner

We would like to hear from you! We're looking for ensembles and choirs to feature in upcoming "Choir Spotlight" articles. If you're proud of your group, and would like to share your story, simply click the link below and tell us what makes your group special. This could be your chance to be a big headliner!

What types of articles would you like to read in future newsletters? Please click the link below, and give us your ideas for newsletter articles. Whether it is tips to motivate your students, teacher success stories, or simple costume and styling tips, we want to be your inside show choir guide!

Tell Us!

For most of us, memories of this past summer include warm weather, sunny skies, and outdoor fun. But for the Columbus North High School show choir in Columbus, Indiana, the summer was a roller coaster ride of emotions, as their northern Columbus community dealt with catastrophic flooding.

Janie Gordon, the school's show choir director, recalls the dramatic events: "Many of my choir students and their families were affected by the flooding, either directly losing their homes or helping friends and family members who had lost theirs. We also had a lot of teachers and support staff who lost or had to rebuild their homes. It seemed like we were all really down and emotionally drained at the start of school in August."

Now more than ever, Janie realized the show had to go on! That's when she and her choir received an unexpected boost. "I got an email from our city officials telling me that John Mellencamp would like to use one of my choirs to open for him in his concert here in Columbus," she relates. "Wow! I think I read that email at least four times before it sunk in."

The show was originally intended to be part of an A&E television series, but once scheduled, Mellencamp and the city organizers decided to auction tickets to the show for flood relief. "The crazy part is that my students had to arrange the three songs that Mellencamp chose for us to sing," Janie points out. "We did them a cappella. It became a great music education piece."

The night of the concert, everyone felt like real rock stars....at least for 15 minutes on stage! "We rented a stretch limo, greeted the crowd, and sang our hearts out to a very loud and crazy audience," Janie remembers fondly. "John Mellencamp stood and listened at the side of the stage, and greeted the kids and me as we came off. It was so cool!" What began as a very trying time led to a very happy ending.



Columbus North High School
Columbus, Indiana

Behind The Scenes

Employee Spotlight



Rivar's President Ron Hellems is uniquely qualified to comment on the history of show choir, as well as its future. After 23 years directing show choir at Carmel High School in Carmel, Indiana, Ron has developed a reputation as a key figure in the genre's development. His show choirs became well known throughout the state of Indiana, and the country, because of their success in competitions, not to mention a growing list of students from the program who went on to be music educators, or to successful careers on Broadway.



Ron makes it clear that none of the music educators of his generation actually were trained in the medium of show choir. Most colleges didn't offer it, tending to be adamantly opposed to integrating "popular" music into high school choral programs. But for Ron, show choir seemed a perfect fit. "I found that I could impart musical training, vocal technique, and performance skills to high school students more easily through the music that they, and I, could connect with," he recalls. "After all, I was only four to five years older than my students when I started teaching. I had no real idea what I was doing, but they listened and followed as if I was a seasoned educator, and somehow, together we found success."

When Ron judges groups today, he is amazed at the amount of footwork and body work that the kids can do. "That has to be one of the biggest changes," Ron asserts. "The second biggest change is the complexity of the competition for show choirs now. The competition is much more intense than in my days."

Ron is uncertain about the future trends in store for show choir. "The main generation teachers who built the movement are coming to the end of their careers," he points out. "...It will be interesting to see who will follow, and how they will achieve their own personal glory." As for Ron, he's happy facilitating the costuming elements for current programs and helping show choirs reach their dreams of design and execution.

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