

# Artists Among Us: The Sounds of Pittsburgh Chorus—Real Women, Real Harmony, Real Fun

by Christopher Cussat

The Sounds of Pittsburgh Chorus (SPC) has been recognized for its reputation of excellence in sound and performance for over 30 years throughout the tri-state area. What is perhaps not as well known is the fact that many of SPC's members are or have worked in healthcare.

Originating in 1974, SPC is one of 600 chapters of Sweet Adelines International (SAI)—which combined have nearly 30,000 women members carrying on the a cappella harmony “barbershop quartet” tradition by singing a wide variety of music arranged in the barbershop style—from Broadway show tunes and big band sounds to patriotic crowd pleasers and old time ballads. SPC's objective is to educate chorus members in this original American art form, entertain the community, and support efforts to promote and retain this music for future generations. The group pursues these objectives through music education, performance, and community service throughout the Greater Pittsburgh area.

Current president of SPC, Diane Parente, is an RN who worked in a hospital setting for 23 years and later taught Activities of Daily Living (ADLs) to special needs people aged 15 to 85 for nearly a decade. “What we all take for granite, these people cannot sometimes do, so I helped them,” she notes. “Both jobs were very rewarding.”

Parente then worked for two years in a nursing home/sub-acute care facility until her parents became ill and she took time off to help with their care. Currently, she is not working in the health profession, but Parente maintains her specialty in IV team and Blood Bank work. “I am always open to any job opportunities that are available and hope to someday soon work part time only,” she adds.

Right now, Parente is devoting her time to being the president of SPC, but she has long been involved with musical performing arts. “I have always sung with some kind of musical group, community chorus, and church choir.” In fact, when she joined SAI, Parente was also singing with a community chorus at the same time.

Parente acknowledges that her great love for music is a direct result of her parents' influence. “My parents were both musical and we always sang during long rides in the car and harmonized too.” For Parente, this influence has translated into a life-long love affair with music. “Music is a part of my life as far back as I can remember—I think music touches every part of life from sad to happy.” She also explains that music triggers memories, music can make us cry and make us joyful, and that music is a part of every religion and every celebration. “When you have had a bad day, just get on those risers and sing and you will immediately forget your troubles and feel better!”



Like many artistic people, Parente also loves exploring other creative endeavors. “I have taken gardening classes, Ukrainian Easter Egg making, ceramics, grant writing seminars, and also the contact for our chorus to the Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council,” she adds.

Music education in art of singing barbershop harmony is another on-going project for the SPC. In fact, each rehearsal begins with ear training exercises to school the members in pitch retention and note intervals—and proper physical and vocal techniques for good singing are also incorporated into each practice. In addition, personal vocal instructions are offered throughout the year, and SAI makes available coaches, audio, and video tools for vocal and administrative personnel—with additional seminars held on a regular schedule.

Although she is naturally so drawn to music, Parente relishes all of the years she worked as a nurse and would not go back to alter her professional history. “I loved my career as a nurse and would never change the choices I made because every one of them was a learning experience.”

Most of the other members of SPC would probably say the same thing. In fact, seven current members of the group are nurses (not all of them are working at present) and one member is currently enrolled in an RN bachelor's degree program. “We had four other RNs that have left the chorus because of retirement, moving away, and various other reasons. In addition, we have a mixture of other professions in our chorus: teachers, marketing professionals, secretaries, administrative assistants, and housewives—you name it, we have it,” she concludes. “But when we come together on those risers—we are all SINGERS!”

SPC enthusiastically invites women to join them at any of their Monday night rehearsals from 7:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. to see if this exciting hobby is something you would be interested in. Location: Coraopolis United Methodist Church, 1205 Ridge Avenue, Coraopolis, PA 15108. Please call 412-279-6062 or e-mail: [mamember@mac.com](mailto:mamember@mac.com) with any questions. For more information on SPC or SAI visit: [www.soundsofpg.org](http://www.soundsofpg.org) and [www.sweetadelineintl.org](http://www.sweetadelineintl.org).

## THE SOUNDS OF PITTSBURGH CHORUS (SPC) IS PROUD TO ANNOUNCE ITS RECENT MEDALS AT THE 2010 REGION 17 SWEET ADELINES INTERNATIONAL (SAI) CONTEST:

- 1st Place Division AA Chorus
- 2nd Place Overall Chorus
- Dynasty: 5th Place Quartet

## THE SOUNDS OF PITTSBURGH CHORUS 2010 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- July 19 PNC Park - National Anthem
- August 22-23 Coaching with Jim Arns
- October 9 SPC Annual Show
- November 7-8 Coaching with Cindy Hansen-Ellis

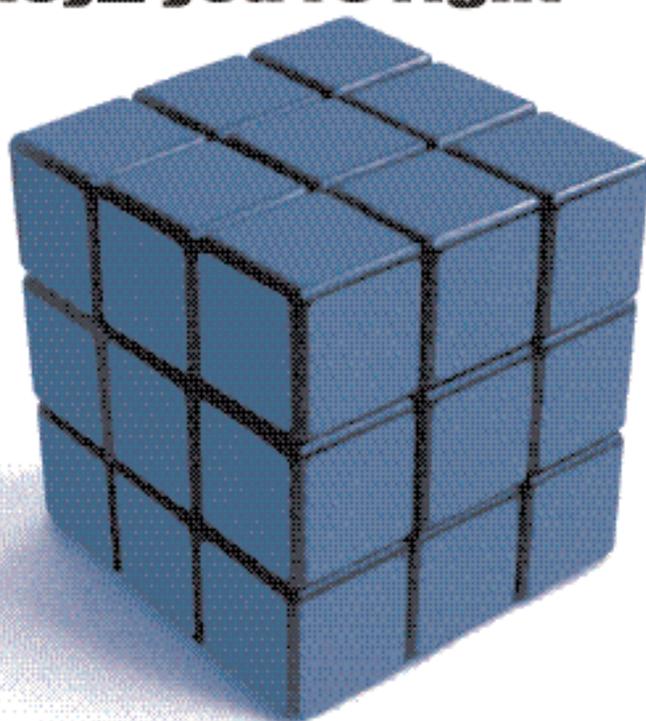
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