



WHY I GIVE

SWEET ADELINE SHELLY HUGHES CONSCIOUS ACTS OF KINDNESS

Of all the reasons Shelly Hughes cites for why she is a longtime member and ardent financial supporter of Sweet Adelines, one word seems to sum it up: kindness.

In 1992, as a tenor plagued by a tough case of pharyngitis, she failed her first audition with the Melodeers, a highly respected, international champion chorus she wanted very much to join. After taking a couple of months to recover, she returned to try again. The assessor conducting her vocal range test suggested she was actually a lead or baritone.

“From there, a lead was born,” Shelly remembered. “I continued through the audition process, truly having to re-learn my role. Singing melody instead of harmony, not taking the top note on the chord, and singing many more words and pick-ups. I struggled to find the pitch; I kept hearing the tenor note instead of the lead. But I sang the correct lead notes when the song started.”

Melodeers Director Jim Arns moved the audition to a contest song, sung in a quartet format. Shelly admitted to “shaking in her heels” until Cori Albrecht (bass of the 2008 International Champion Quartet Four Bettys), put her hand in the middle of Shelly’s back and told her, “You’ve got this. Just sing.”

Shelly sang the lead pitch, passed the audition and the next week, began her 25-year (so far) career with the Melodeers.

“It was that small act of kindness so long ago,” Shelly remembered. “During all those years I’ve had the privilege of singing with the Melodeers. All possible through an act of kindness. It’s that kindness that keeps me here — and I’ve seen and been a part of such acts, in all shapes and forms.”

Kindness, deep friendships, respect and a love of barbershop — all elements of Sweet Adelines that Shelly treasures — combined in another monumental moment for her in 2014, when the Melodeers won their seventh international title. It had been a breathtaking competition — the Rich-Tone Chorus hoped to tie the Melodeers’ six wins but took second that day. After the results were announced, the Melodeers returned to the function room to celebrate and read scoresheets.

“From out of the blue, the Rich-Tones and Director Dale Syverson entered the

room, chanting ‘Melodeers, Melodeers!’” Shelly remembered. “Scoresheets were tossed aside. The Rich-Tones performed for us and we for them. It was the greatest display of sportsmanship I’ve been a part of in Sweet Adelines. I’m sure these types of scenarios happen in this organization every day and that makes me smile.”

It is also what makes her a fervent Sweet Adelines philanthropist.

“My earliest memory of wanting to donate goes back to grade school. I watched the Muscular Dystrophy telethon and asked my Dad if we could give. He turned the tables on me, asking lots of questions such as what did I know about the organization, why should we give, how will the money be used? He went on to explain that I would hear many cries for money over my lifetime. How you choose to give should be thought out, not impulsive. And you should volunteer your time and skills, not just your money. It was one of the strongest life lessons I was given,” Shelly remembered.

She looked for organizations that she loved, ones that offered exciting opportunities and practiced good business. Early on, those qualities in Sweet Adelines earned her loyalty and decades of volunteer leadership and financial support.

“Sitting on the sidelines or just being a card-carrying member is simply not in my DNA,” Shelly explained. The reason I give is simple. It is who I am. In Sweet Adelines, I’ve met some amazing women over the years. Our leadership is the best. These women value our traditions and constantly review our practices to make sure needed changes are made to protect our future.”

She continued: “In my younger years, I didn’t have the kind of financial security I have now, so I gave through volunteerism. As the years went on and my financial security grew, so did my opportunities to give.”

Sweet Adelines is not only a beloved musical sisterhood, it’s an important investment, Shelly added.

“Just as I plan for retirement, I plan to give. Each year my husband and I evaluate where we would like to donate and set target dollar amounts, along with projects or events needing our time. Donating to Sweet Adelines is a sound investment, with huge returns.”

As a Lifetime Member,

Shelly supports the Young Singers Foundation, Young Women in Harmony and is an inaugural donor to The Overtone Society. She and her husband support the association’s administrative needs, too. The Hughes Gerhke Champion Showcase at the Tulsa headquarters is named in honor of their contributions.

Join Us.

Our future lies in the voices of remarkable young women. Ensure this legacy and join us in making a gift to mark the Young Singers Foundation’s 25th anniversary.

For your convenience, there is a return envelope inserted into this issue of The Pitch Pipe.

On behalf of young barbershoppers everywhere, thank you!

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