



# NORTH METRO CHORUS' A CAPPELLA CHALLENGE FOR YOUTH

*YSF Grant helps bring barbershop to young singers*

During the autumn of 2015, North Metro Chorus Director Erin Howden presented her vision of a platform through which youth in Ontario could showcase their vocal talent and share their joy of performing a cappella music just as North Metro does every time it takes the stage. This project, which we named A Cappella Challenge, would also be an opportunity for community outreach and to introduce young singers to the barbershop art form.

Of course, somewhere between the vision and reality lay plenty of hard work, sleepless nights, a steep learning curve, a sense of accomplishment, and a great deal of joy. Two long-time North Metro members, event co-chairs Colleen Drautz and Karen Armstrong, were up to the challenge!

We are very excited to share that A Cappella Challenge has now concluded three successful runs. Through an online process, performers (age 25 and under) from universities, schools and community groups audition to take part in the Challenge. Once finalists are chosen, a formal show performance, to which tickets are sold, takes place to determine the winners. During the day, an education module is offered for singers to learn about barbershop music. They learn a song together, and the groups have an opportunity to network. North Metro performs during this time as well as at the evening show.

This year, we were grateful to have the support of Sweet Adelines International through a grant from the Young Singers Foundation (YSF). We are also thankful for our other sponsors: Region #16 Young Women In Harmony, Sing Canada Harmony, Melody Hine, Michaela Johnston, and private/corporate sponsors.

For many of the young singers, the event's introduction to barbershop has been eye-opening. One participant said, "Wow, I had no idea how great barbershop music was...I always thought

it was more old-fashioned." The chorus has gained new members through the Challenge, and many seeds have been planted that may yield future Sweet Adelines. Demonstrating that there are opportunities to continue a cappella singing as a lifelong pursuit is an important goal of the event. Based on the talent of the performers crossing the stage during the first three Challenges, the upcoming generation of singers has much to offer!

The Challenge has also allowed North Metro Chorus to support their community through The Music Box Children's Charity of Canada, which provides opportunities for disadvantaged youth to participate in a wide array of music programs. Just as the YSF receives generous support from SA membership, audiences at the Challenge have been generous in their support of this charitable endeavour.

The A Cappella Challenge will continue to provide North Metro Chorus with the opportunity to share its art form and love of singing with the next generation and provide local youth the opportunity to share their talent with the community. It has been an exciting journey thus far and one that promises to inspire both competitors and audiences in years to come. The joy of lifelong singing is alive and well in Southern Ontario! 🎵

*Colleen Drautz, co-chair of A Cappella Challenge, is a proud member of North Metro Chorus.*

*Grants like the one that helped fund A Cappella Challenge are made possible by gifts to Sweet Adelines International. The current grant cycle will remain open until June 1. For information, visit [www.sweetadelines.com/education](http://www.sweetadelines.com/education).*