

Grosse Pointe South Choir Parent Survival Handbook



****We dedicate this book to the loving memory of
original author, Julie Smith**

Revised 2009 by Lisa Pappas
Revised 2010 by Dona Johnson-Beach &
Cindy Aboukasm

****What is GP South Choir about? ****

- Choir is a “co-curricular” class. Students receive a grade and 10 credits/year but are also required to attend after school activities, rehearsals and performances.
- Ellen Bowen (ellen.bowen@gpschools.org) is the vocal music teacher and program director.
- The choir office phone # is: (313) 432-3638
- The choir office fax # is : (313) 432-3639
- We have a Choir Booster coordinator. This person works in the choir office a couple days each week and can be reached at (313) 432-3638.
- Richard Wolf (Richard.wolf@gpschools.org) is the piano accompanist, theory assistant, & para-professional choir assistant. Richard’s office phone # is: (313) 432-3688.
- Students are placed into co-curricular vocal groups:
 - Beginning Choir
 - South Singers
 - Pointe Singers

All of the above choirs perform at the following mandatory concerts and events during the year.

- **Munchies, Music, and Meet (M3) (October)**
- **Fall Follies (late October & early November)**
- ****Mother’s Club Tea (December) South & Pointe Singers only**
- **Holiday Concert (December)**
- **Holiday Caroling (December)**
- **MSVMA -Michigan State Vocal Music Association Solo & Ensemble Festival (District level-Jan.) (State level- March)**
- **Broadway (June)**

Other Choir Related Activities

- All School Musical (optional)
- Choir Trips (optional)

- **Summer Select Choir Workshop** is held the middle of August and is run by the Grosse Pointe Public School System. It is open to pre-auditioned 6-8th graders and all incoming 9-12th grade choir students throughout the district. All choir students are highly encouraged to participate in this one week workshop (with a final concert at the end of the week). Outside choral directors are brought in along with district music faculty. ****Mandatory for all choir students after freshman year.
- **That's Entertainment Show Choir Workshop** is held the week following the Summer Select Workshop during the middle to end of August. This one week workshop is open to all students in and out of the GPPSS with no audition required. This workshop is one week culminating in a final concert performance at the end of the week. This workshop is open to middle and high school age students. Students work with music faculty, as well as some outside high caliber choral conductors, such as Duane Davis from Western Michigan University. This workshop is required for all Pointe Singers and South Singers and is highly recommended for all incoming freshmen choir students. Most of the music and choreography learned at this workshop is performed in the choir's Fall Follies concert in November. Students who have not attended Show Choir in August will not perform in those numbers in November. This workshop involves both music and choreography (dance) rehearsals. *****Mandatory for all choir students after freshman year.
- **Private Voice Lessons-** Many students take private voice lessons from private teacher. See choir website www.gpschoir.org for a list of voice teachers.
- **Tri-M Musical Honorary Society** is a National Honorary Association and an affiliate of the Music Educational National Association. At South, Ellen Bowen and usually one other staff member, are the faculty sponsors. Students must earn points and apply or be recommended for admittance. Points are earned by participation in choirs, band or orchestra, attending summer music camps, taking private lessons, participating in the musical etc. Students that have accumulated the required points may apply for admission to Tri-M and may be admitted only after a successful audition. (audition may be vocal or instrumental, piano etc).

The Importance of Rehearsal Attendance and Schedule Conflicts!

- Unlike after school sports teams and activities, Choir is a co-curricular class – students receive a grade and 10 credits annually toward their fine arts requirement. A choir student's grade is dependent upon attendance and participation at choir rehearsals and performances, as well as classroom behavior and participation. An absence from rehearsal is equivalent to not turning in a homework or project assignment in a regular curricular class.

**** In the event of a medical or family issue, please have your student discuss the conflict with Ellen as soon as it is known so that she may work around it.****

FAQ

- 1. *Can my student participate in athletics at South and choir?*** Yes! In fact, many South choir students have done so. Students must be very responsible about looking at their athletic schedules and choir schedules ahead of time to resolve conflicts. Students and parents must be pro-active and understand that attendance at after-school rehearsals is mandatory. Most mandatory rehearsals only span a short period of one athletic season.
- 2. *Can my child participate in band or orchestra or other music related activities?*** Yes. Students and parents must be proactive in looking ahead at concert and rehearsal schedules for both, and understand that the instrumental ensembles also have their own Solo & Ensemble District and State adjudications. (MSBOA-Michigan State Band & Orchestra Association). Students should be up front with any conflicts in schedules with both ensemble directors.
- 3. *What about homework and study?***

Students at long rehearsals are required to bring their homework with them. Rehearsals can vary greatly, and while off stage, students are given an area to study and are expected to keep up with their academic work. Many of our choir students take advanced placement (AP) and honors classes, and choir provides an instant study group for students in those classes, as well as advanced students who are willing to help students in other classes. It is important that choir students learn to pace their homework assignments with their rehearsals.
- 4. *What is the big deal if my student misses a rehearsal?***

Choir is an ensemble. Students sing different parts- from 3 to sometimes 6 different parts in a song. Our choirs all perform dance choreography as well. Each student holds a spot in the “blocking” of a show. Entrances and exits are rehearsed and everything is under a very demanding time limit. Every absence at a rehearsal affects the entire group! Costume changes and props are used and students need to know at what time to change a costume and practice doing a quick change when needed. Students need to be aware at all times of what is going on around them. We always strive for a professional production. Students are not allowed to “goof around” during these stage rehearsals, we take them seriously-not only for the professional production which is our goal, but also for the student’s safety!

**** Any date marked choreography on the calendar is mandatory.**

5. *Why are students expected to participate in mandatory fundraisers?*

As with nearly every other budget area, funding of the choir program is under the financial and economic constraints, as are all other areas of the school budget. The GPS choir produces opportunities and programs that simply cannot be accomplished without money! All of our shows involve costumes and props. Our Choir Boosters raise money that provides for a professional choreographer, helps to pay for costs for the music, costumes, props, and also provide scholarship assistance to students that cannot afford costume fees, etc. Our shows often bring in professional musicians that require payment. All students benefit from the money raised by the choir and in turn must participate in the mandatory fundraisers. Many of the fundraisers we do are based on student manpower. They only work with the involvement of many bodies. However, we have found that the students enjoy these activities and they have become a fun way to for them to work together for a good cause! These activities raise large sums of money for the choir program and don't always involve selling.

6. *They actually call her "Ellen"?*

Yep! That's the way "Ellen" prefers it....and Richard Wolf is "Richard".

7. *What & where is the "PAC"?*

The PAC is the Grosse Pointe Public Schools Performing Arts Center. It is located at GP North HS @ 707 Vernier Road is the main performance venue for the South Choir. Many of our larger shows take place here. *Please deliver and pick up your student off Morningside through the back door of the PAC. We utilize and rehearse in the the new Multi-purpose Room at South whenever possible.

8. *Why check email?*

All choir schedules, and most importantly "changes to tentative schedules", are sent via email. Email is the most efficient way to keep up to date with choir schedules. At the beginning of the year- a tentative choir schedule is sent out. As the year goes on, rehearsals may be changed, sometimes because of scheduling conflicts with other groups etc. We usually form separate email groups for extra events like the trip or the musical. .

GPS Choir Web Site

The GPS Choir Web site is www.gpsouthchoir.org.

On the site, you can find rehearsal schedules, notifications about upcoming concerts, tickets, voice teacher information, booster information, fundraisers, forms, as well as photos. The website is updated as necessary.

The GPS Choir Facebook page!

It is a quick and easy way to chat with other choir families. There are also all kinds of choir photo albums from past years through the present! If you or your student has a facebook page, it is an easy way to get cool photos- (many from rehearsals!) to keep and share with your families and friends.

Costume Rental Fees

The choir program needs to charge a yearly rental fee to maintain the choir dresses & tuxedos that the students wear at performances. Each choir group has at least one issued costume and in most cases, the women have 2 dresses. The collected rental fees are used to purchase replacement dresses and tuxedos, buy new sets of dresses when the old ones are too worn, and cover the dry-cleaning cost of the costumes at the end of each school year. Forms for costume fees are available on the choir website: www.gpsouthchoir.org

**** (This fee qualifies for financial assistance, up to 100%, from the GPPSS, if approved by Assistant Principal)****

Costume Information

**** Places to purchase choir shoes and dancewear ****

1. Required Shoes

ALL choir students are required to purchase his/her own "character shoes". These are a formal style of leather shoes that are worn for performances. The men's are black and have a pointed toe. The women's are taupe with a 2" inch heel.

Some students may be selected to tap dance in certain numbers. **The choreographer selects these students at rehearsals.** These students will need to purchase another pair of character shoes with taps added to the bottom. The students still need the shoes without taps for other numbers.

****Cat Paws**** are rubber soles that are heat sealed onto the bottom of character and tap shoes so that they do not scuff a stage or make noise when entering or exiting the stage. Cat paws can be applied at :

*Verfaille & Cosette Shoes, 23515 9 Mile Drive, St. Clair Shores,
586-775-5537*

Be forewarned-applying the cat paws takes 24 hours for the adhesive to completely take hold before you can get your shoes back!

2. Fancy Dancers- 22600 Harper Ave. St. Clair Shores. (Between 10 & 11 Mile roads) 586-775-4167.

***They are familiar with our program- and will know what shoes we are using for our groups.
Mention GPS Choir and you will get a 10% discount!***

3. **Discount Dance Supplies (online and catalog orders)**
www.DancewearSolutions.com

This online site and mail order catalog has a huge line of dance shoes and dancewear related items for great prices, but be careful! You have to know what you are buying in terms of style and brand of shoe especially. **Dance shoes DO NOT run the same sizes as street shoes!** If you already know what exact shoe you need and the size- this company is pretty fast with their shipping and fairly priced. If you are getting dance shoes for the first time and don't know how they are supposed to fit- go to Fancy Dancers- they can fit you properly. If your strap broke and you know exactly what you need and don't have time to go to Fancy Dancers- this site can be the way to go.

Costume Requirements to Purchase

Ladies:

1. **Tan character shoes 2" heel (see above)**
2. **L'eggs pantyhose-Sheer Energy-Suntan-sheer to waist (should be worn for all performances unless given specific instructions otherwise)**
3. **Lipstick- Revlon-cream only (not sheer or frost) any true red shade.**
4. **Spankies- nylon panty worn over underwear and hose. Freshmen need a black pair or two. Other ensembles check with Ellen or costume parents on color. (available at Fancy Dancers)**
5. **Long-line bra- bra should be the type that comes to a point in the front and below the waist. Beige is the preferred color. They can be expensive, but most girls wear them for all 4 years of choir. They can be purchased at Sears, JC Penney's, Macys, Frederick of Hollywood or Victoria's Secret.*** Please check Pretty Things in GP Village.**
6. **It is recommended that students have comfortable dance clothes and soft dance shoes for choreography- girls may not want to spend long hours in character shoes for these rehearsals. Tennis shoes do not work well on the stage and may actually cause students to trip. Soft ballet or jazz dance shoes work well.**

Guys:

1. **Black character shoes (see above)**
2. **Black dress socks (should always be worn for all performances unless given specific instructions otherwise)**
3. **Plain white t-shirts (no graphics on) to be worn under tux shirt.**
4. **2 pairs white boxer briefs.**
5. **It is recommended that students have comfortable dance clothes and soft dance shoes for choreography- guys may not want to wear the hard leather character shoes for long rehearsals. Tennis shoes do not work well on the stage and may actually cause students to trip. Soft ballet or jazz shoes work well.**

Performance Hair

The choir performs as a unit and our costumes present us as a unified, elegant and professional group. Students with uncombed, messy or outrageous hair take away from the group. Our costumes are very formal and our hair needs to match! The other consideration is that if hair is not

pulled away from the face (ladies) or cut and groomed neatly (guys), the audience doesn't see the performers face- just a lot of shadows. Students should have hair groomed in the following manner:

Ladies- need to wear their hair off their face and ears. They should learn how to curl their hair and use hair spray.

Gentlemen- need to have their hair trimmed short and off their ears.

No "wet looks", punk, or unusual styles that distract from the group look are acceptable.

Odds & Ends

1. Student Parties

There are 3 parent chaperoned choir student parties, hosted in the homes of choir families, throughout the year. All choir students are welcome and encouraged to attend. Check the choir web page for dates and locations. Emails will be sent out prior to each party with exact details. Classes are assigned different food items to bring to each party.

Halloween Party-takes place on either a Friday or Saturday night in late October. THIS IS A COSTUME PARTY!! The students really do wear costumes! They actually spend a great deal of time coming up with really creative costume ideas- sometimes in small groups.

Holiday Party-takes place the same night that the choir does the holiday caroling after the groups have finished their rounds. Dress is semi-formal. An inexpensive gift exchange is often done.

Broadway Party-takes place in June after the last Broadway performance. Paper plate awards are voted on by students and given out. The dress is casual. This party is bittersweet- as it is the last get-together for the choir year- and the last hurrah before the graduating seniors go off to college.

2. Student Social Fee

Every student is required to pay \$5 in social fees, which are used to pay for party supplies at each of the choir parties-Halloween, Holiday and Broadway as well as "Thank You" flower bouquets and

gifts presented at performances and end of the year banquet gifts.

3. Rehearsal Meal Fee

A onetime meal fee of \$40.00 covers the entire year. Meals and snacks are often provided during long rehearsals and other events. These meals are often well balanced and nutritious. Consideration of individual dietary needs is respected. Often these meals are homemade by parent volunteers.

4. Choir Banquet

This is a formal banquet held in middle to late May at the Grosse Pointe War Memorial. It is usually in the early evening on a weeknight. All choir students are expected to attend and family members are welcome and encouraged to join us in this year-end award ceremony and tribute to the seniors. A beautiful sit down dinner is served upstairs in the ballroom and then all move downstairs to the auditorium for the award ceremony and slideshow.

Choir students' dinners are paid for by the Choir Boosters. Families must pay per person to attend the dinner portion of the evening activities.

5. Choir Booster Member Meetings

These meetings are usually held on the 2nd Tuesday of the month at the home of a Choir Booster family.

**Choir Booster Memberships provide a substantial financial contribution to the GPS Choirs. Membership forms are available on the website. Memberships are available at all financial levels. All memberships are tax-deductible as the GPS Choir Boosters are a 501(c)3 tax-exempt non-profit organization.

Memberships are required to qualify for student scholarships Memberships can be paid by checks or credit cards.

6. Choir Booster Membership Appreciation Gala

The Member Appreciation Gala is a complimentary, upscale evening of food and friends offered to Choir Booster members who have chosen to join at the "Gala" level or above. * Remember- membership "upgrades" are always accepted in order to participate in this evening.

This is an evening for adults only.

Booster Scholarships

- To qualify for a GPS Choir Scholarship, a family must be a GPS Choir Booster Member and the student/family must be active in Booster fundraising efforts.
- Scholarship application forms can be downloaded on the GPS Choir website: www.gpsouthchoir.org
- Applications are considered and approved by the Scholarship Committee.
- All information is completely confidential and not available for public record.
- Scholarships are available to help cover up to 100% of the costs of costume fees, (if first denied by the School Assistance), up to 100% of the rehearsal meal fee and towards the cost of extra-curricular summer vocal programs.

****Special circumstances of family hardship should be discussed in private with Ellen. Please call 313-432-3638 or email her at ellen.bowen@gpschools.org for an appointment. All discussions are completely confidential. **NO STUDENT WILL BE DECLINED ADMISSION INTO A CHOIR FOR LACK OF FUNDS.****

Trip Scholarships

This special scholarship is designed to financially assist a choir student's family to pay for the cost of the extra-curricular choir travel. A family needs to be a Booster member to qualify, but must demonstrate financial need and meet the same guidelines for the public school free lunch program. Families who qualify must contribute a minimum amount towards the trip. The choir student and family must participate in Booster fundraising activities.

These are special circumstances that must be discussed confidentially with the choir director.

Who are the GPS Choir Boosters?

- The Choir Boosters are a non-profit 501c3 organization that fundraises to support the vocal music program at GPS beyond what the school budget can provide. The Choir Boosters provide funding for the following:
 - Choreography
 - Choir Booster coordinator salary
 - Scholarships for students in need of financial assistance to cover costs of costume fees, summer vocal camps, and rehearsal meal fees
 - Purchase/supplement beyond the costume budget for the cost of new costumes
 - Purchase/supplement beyond the choir budget for the cost of musical scores for performance & competitions
 - Provide supplemental funding for choir travel performances.
 - Every choir student benefits from the efforts of the Choir Boosters and we would like every parent to join at whatever level is comfortable

Choir Booster Fundraising Events

Program Ads

There are 3 performance programs printed by the Choir Boosters each year: Fall Follies, Holiday Concert & Broadway. Choir students are able to sell ads for the program and receive 50% of the funds into their own individual trip account. Many families (parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles & siblings) use the ad space for well wishes to their choir student. Ad forms are available on the choir website: www.gpsouthchoir.org. GPS Choir is a 501c3 organization. All ads placed are tax deductible.

Car Washes

Car washes are another important fundraiser are held twice a year- after “That’s Entertainment” in August & Broadway in June. Students sign up for time slots to wash cars...and have a great time while doing it! This is a good time for all! Attendance is mandatory for all choir students.

The Little Blue Book Delivery

This is a 2-day (Friday evening & Saturday morning) annual Choir Booster fundraiser in November and is a **mandatory function for all choir students and at least one parent to participate.** On Friday evening, choir students and parents meet to stuff “the Little Blue Book phone directories” into plastic sleeves. On Saturday, they are dispersed with a parent driver, into pre-assigned Grosse Pointe neighborhoods to deliver the books on doorsteps of each home. All students must attend the Friday night preparation and Saturday delivery. Parents are asked to drive while the students deliver the books. Food and refreshments are provided.

Holiday Community Caroling

This is a **required** fundraiser in mid-December. Any member of the Grosse Pointe community has the opportunity to buy the gift of holiday caroling for family, friends, and/or holiday parties. Students are placed into caroling groups with parent drivers who drive the groups to pre-arranged Grosse Pointe homes and functions. Nursing homes and hospitals in the immediate local area are often included. When the caroling is finished, the students’ holiday party follows.

Scrip Gift Card Program

The Scrip Gift Card Program allows choir students to sell gift cards from over 500 retailers through the Great Lakes Scrip Center and they receive a percentage of the dollar amount into their Trip Account. A list of participating retailers is available on the website. This sale is year round and 100% of the profits go into the student seller’s account. These cards make great Christmas, birthday, graduation and thank you gifts.

**** The above fundraisers are consistent from year to year. Each year, some additional fundraisers are introduced and others retired to keep things interesting and profitable!**

**** Any new fundraising ideas are always welcome!**

STUDENT TRIP ACCOUNTS

The GPS choir has been very lucky to perform at various vocal competitions, festivals, or international student venues. These trips are considered to be an extra-curricular activity and are completely voluntary- all costs are to be absorbed by the student's family. The boosters have designed specific fundraisers to help defray some of the costs for Choir Booster member families. All of portions of monies raised by the individual students in these fundraisers are deposited into their individual student trip account. As payments for these trips are due, the student may apply the balance of their trip account as payments. Here is a list of the choir fundraisers that are designed around trip accounts:

- **Ads in Performance Programs-** 50% of the cost of the ad deposited into the Trip Account.
- **The Scrip Gift Card Program-** 100% of funds raised by students deposited into the Trip Account.

*In addition, any unused money in the student's trip account at the end of the year is rolled over to the following year. If student is graduating, the balance may be transferred into a sibling's choir trip account. ****Must be a member of Choir Boosters to be eligible for trip accounts*****

Performances

Season Tickets-

Season Tickets are available to all choir families. Season tickets are available for Fall Follies, Holiday Concert, Spring Musical & Broadway. The first seats filled are the season ticket patrons- thus ensuring the best seats for the shows. After that, the remaining tickets are transferred to *Posterity, A Gallery* in the Village 30 days prior to the performance date for public purchase. Tickets can also be purchase on the choir website, 30 days prior to performance. Remember to send the season ticket form to grandparents, aunts, uncles and friends so that they can take advantage of the best seating too.

GP South Choir Performances

- **Munchies, Music, and Meet (M3)**
This is meant to be a kick-off orientation and get to know each other evening for both parents and students. The upperclassmen provide the "munchies". A brief Choir

Booster meeting is part of the evening and Choir Booster executive board members and some chairpersons will be introduced. It is a great way to find out about the activities for the year ahead! It is also the first opportunity to hear the choirs perform!

- **Fall Follies**

This is the first full performance of **all choirs** at the Performing Arts Center (PAC). Takes place at the end of October/ early November.

- **Mother's Club Tea**

This event is held the first Wednesday in December where the North/South Mother's Club sponsors a community concert featuring the choirs from both North & South @ the PAC.

South Singers & Pointe Singers (no freshmen choir)

All members of the community are welcome at no charge.

- **Holiday Concert**

The holiday concert is held in December. **All choirs perform.** Dates and locations may change each year.

- **Choir Trip Benefit Concert**

This concert is usually held in February. **All Choirs perform.** The Touring Choir is highlighted during the show, and choirs from our two middle schools perform as well. This trip usually falls a week before the Tour Choir leaves. All proceeds from this concert go to help with trip expenses.

- **Broadway**

This show is the choir's big end-of-the-year concert, usually in late May or early June. It is the choir's tribute and farewell to its graduating seniors. In addition to **all the choirs performing**, each senior caps their choir career by singing a solo, making this a wonderful and emotionally charged evening.

- **Graduation**

All Choirs perform! This performance counts toward the final grade, and is mandatory.

The Ensembles

- **Pointe Singers-** This is an auditioned and nationally recognized group that is known for their excellent singing, performing & choreography. This is the most advanced group. They rehearse every day during class and have frequent after school rehearsals and extra performances. On occasion, they may be excused from classes for special performances.
- **South Singers-** They perform on all the required concerts and perform at some additional concerts as announced.
- **Freshmen Choir-** This is a beginning ensemble and provides the initial musical training upon which the singers will rely on through all 4 years of choir.

Healthy Singing

If you are having vocal problems, you should see a physician that specializes in vocal disorders.

- **Dr. Adam Rubin, MD**
Lakeshore Ear, Nose & Throat, PC
21000 Twelve Mile Road, St. Clair Shores, MI 48081
(586)779-7610 www.lakeshoreent.com
- **Dr. Glen M. Gardner, MD**
Henry Ford Health System
2799 West Grand Boulevard
Detroit, MI 48202
(313) 876-3272 <http://henryford.com>

