

# All-Ohio State Fair Youth Choir

*Ohio's "Singing Ambassadors of Goodwill"*

## What is the All-Ohio State Fair Youth Choir?

The All-Ohio State Fair Youth Choir (AOSFYC) was founded in 1963 by Glenville D. Thomas, who led the Youth Choir in concerts for thousands of visitors at the Ohio State Fair, directed them in a number of European tours and took them to several national parades. Championed by four-term governor James A. Rhodes, the Choir has sung for several gubernatorial inaugurations and was named Ohio's "Singing Ambassadors of Goodwill" by the state legislature.

Since 1992 the All-Ohio Youth Choir has been led by Charles R. Snyder of Coshocton. He and his staff have emphasized vocal health – vitally important for the Fair's outdoor performances and unpredictable weather conditions, and commissioned new works which the AOSFYC has premiered.

Five days before the opening of the Ohio State Fair, the new Choir meets at the Ohio Expo Center in Columbus and launches into a rigorous schedule that includes vocal training; sessions on vocal health; part, sectional and full rehearsals; solo auditions; and marching instruction. Once the Fair opens, the Youth Choir sings six to eight concerts a day, marching up to ten miles each day to various performance sites around the 360-acre fairgrounds. The 2008 Choir learned, memorized, polished and performed 65 songs in 103 performances.

## What makes the Ohio State Fair special?

The Ohio State Fair originated in 1850 and is one of the largest state fairs in the country. Each year, the Fair attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors. Some popular activities of fair-goers and choir members include:

- Strolling through the Ohio Department of Natural Resources Park, the scenic "Central Park" of the fairgrounds
- Gliding on the Sky Ride high above the Midway, and enjoying other Midway attractions
- Sampling deep-fried *anything* "on a stick" ☺
- Shopping at the Bricker and Commercial buildings
- Discovering the butter cow and other butter sculptures
- Exploring the assorted animal barns
- Browsing representations of some of Ohio's finest crafts, horticulture, and other projects
- Experiencing the assorted displays of leadership skills demonstrated through the number of youth organizations such as: the Choir, the All-Ohio State Fair Band, 4-H, FFA, Scouts, the Ohio Farm Bureau, and the Junior Fair Board

These and many other exciting opportunities are made possible by the year-long work of the Ohio Expositions Commission and their Staff.



*"My AOSFYC experience was nothing short of thrilling. I got to spend 18 days doing what I love with people who love it as much as I do. It is something I will never forget."  
- Holly Willer, AOSFYC alumna*



## Tell me more!

**WHO:** Any student in grades 9-12 may apply. Singers will be selected on the basis of their musical ability and experience, their teacher's recommendation, and the consent of their parent or guardian.

**WHEN:** July 23 through August 9, 2009. *Only singers available the entire 18 days should apply.*

**WHERE:** The 200 Choir members live on site at the Ohio Expo Center in Columbus, and are housed in the Rhodes Center complex. Students are under capable, experienced adult leadership night and day. Each day, three balanced meals are provided in the Rhodes Center cafeteria at no charge.

**MUSIC:** A variety of music will be rehearsed and performed to develop the Choir's 2009 theme, "*A Place Like Home.*" Music will include patriotic songs, spirituals, show tunes, folk songs, novelty arrangements, and several pieces composed or arranged especially for the Choir.

**COSTS:** Other than personal spending money, the only cost to the choir members is the expense of the music packet (approximately \$75), the cost of 2 or more choir uniforms (approximately \$40 each), and a choir jacket (\$24). Other costs (approximately \$600 per participant!) are underwritten by the Ohio Expositions Commission. *(As a comparison, fees for similar 18-day musical experiences in 2008 ranged from \$865 to \$2,830!)*

**OTHER:** All applicants must have the approval and recommendation of their director, and must have their applications signed by their parent or guardian, *regardless of the age of the student.*

Completed applications **must be postmarked no later than March 31, 2009.** The selection process cannot begin until all applications have been received. Applicants are evaluated individually and *then in comparison to other applicants of the same voice part.* With approximately 600 singers to consider, it is an involved process.

Once decisions have been finalized, **all applicants will be notified** of their status by mail, usually in late May.

## What's the most important part of the experience?

If you ask singers, they will surely say "the friendships" and then "the amazing music." If you ask members of the Youth Choir Staff this question, they will answer "health and safety."

The Youth Choir Staff works in conjunction with the on-site Ohio State Highway Patrol and the Fair's First Aid Staff to help ensure that the singers remain safe and healthy. There is also a licensed EMT on the Youth Choir Staff.

An important feature of the Youth Choir experience places students in small groups with other rookie singers, with returning members who serve as mentors, and two staff members. Each group - or "opus"- meets daily during the Fair to share thoughts and check in with one another. Often, these groups provide opportunities for singers to develop their closest friendships.

## Who are the leaders of the Choir?

The AOSFYC Staff: competent, capable, caring – words that aptly describe this enthusiastic and multi-talented team of professionals. More than half are respected educators in their home communities; two-thirds are Youth Choir alumni who have lived the AOSFYC experience. They are assisted by six counselors-in-training, all Youth Choir alumni who have completed one or more years of college.

More than half of the Staff members are volunteers. All use precious vacation time or take unpaid leave from their jobs to be part of the Youth Choir's "engine." Together, the All-Ohio Youth Choir Staff has participated in 253 Ohio State Fairs as members of the Choir, Band, and/or Staff!

***"We really appreciate how you take any child and make them yours: if they need to be pushed, you push them; if they need to be slowed down, you slow them down; if they need a hug, you hug them. Thanks so much for all your care." -Teri and Mike Williams, parents of two AOSFYC alumni***