



The MVEer Monthly

December, 2016



Christmas in

Technicolor – Our

Christmas concert is on Saturday, December 10, 2016 at both 2pm and 7:30pm in Greendale High School. Order tickets online at <http://www.mve.org> or call or email Tom Rogina (Cell: 1-262-443-6612, E-mail: rogina.tom@gmail.com)

Our show features the **Bel Canto Boy Choir** and also quartets: **Midnight Croon** and **The Committee**.

Interview with MVE member Sean Stillmank – Dick Marcus

MVEer asks: Why did you get involved in barbershop singing, Sean?

Sean replies: My Cudahy High School teacher, **Brian Plehn**, introduced me to barbershop. It is such a close-knit community. I love the camaraderie and the friendships. This spirit is throughout barbershop, not just in the **Midwest Vocal Express**. I love it.

MVEer asks: Sean, you've a powerful bass voice. Didn't you have a quartet that sang with us on a show? I think you stole the hearts of the audience at the 2014 Spring Show at Nathan Hale High School that happened, as I recall, to be on your prom night!

Sean replies: Yes, as a senior my quartet was **The Degrees** from Cudahy High School. We brought our prom dates to the show. They came in prom dresses and cheered us on. The guys in this picture to the left to right on-stage are: **Darius Sanders**, tenor; Mark Bitzan, lead; me, **Sean Stillmank**, bass (*editor's note: and tallest*); and Brett Gish, baritone.



MVEer asks: You are part of our MVE family now, but tell us about your own family please.

Sean replies: My family was originally from Milwaukee, but we later moved to Cudahy. I have two older twin sisters (two years older) and a younger brother who currently sings in the Cudahy choir, also directed by **Brian Plehn**.

MVEer asks: What do you do for a living, Sean?

Sean replies: I am an electrical apprentice in the local union learning all the basics. This is a five-year apprenticeship. Then I will become a Journeyman before eventually becoming a Master Craftsman.



MVEer asks: Other than singing in quartets, choirs, or tags, have you other hobbies or interests?

Sean replies:

Reading for sure. I read all sorts of things from politics to religion including the Koran and the Bible. My whole family and I also golf, often with various gifts given to those who did well in many interesting challenges. I also like Video Games,

especially those where your own decisions influence the story and that displays great art. One example is **Mass Effect**; it is just extraordinary.



Brett Gish, Sean Stillmank, Brian Plehn, Mark Ditzan, and Darius Sanders



MVEer says: Thanks, Sean, for joining with us in the MVE. You make us stronger.

Sean ends: I love being a part of the Mighty MVE.

Teamwork in a Chorus (or Band) on Game Day – Dick Marcus



The MVE works best when we work together as a team. I've had a chance to work in even larger teams than the 30 to 60 member MVE Chorus, when I was a member of the then 215 member Michigan Marching Band. Recently, I was sent a newsletter from my old band about a piccolo player who graduated in 2016, by the name of Anna Kemeny.

I'm reprinting what she said (with some editing) about the influence of teamwork on her life. Maybe something of what she says will ring true to you as it did to me as we prepare for our Christmas Show on "Game Day."

"The four years that I spent in the Michigan Marching Band taught me, above all, how amazing and valuable it is to be **part of a team**. Through the long and tiring practices, the agony of waiting, and the unbearable pain in my calves, I always knew I could push through because I was part of a 400 person team. After graduation I continued this **team spirit** by joining an Education Reform program called Blue Engine that uses team teaching in classrooms.

This past year I worked on a team with three teaching assistants and an experienced teacher. We split the classroom up into four smaller groups to give the students more individual attention, so it involved a lot of pre-class prep to ensure that we were all on the same page before putting the lesson in front of students. We functioned similar to how the MMB prepares for a show—we learned our positions and jobs in the classroom, we practiced daily and gave each other feedback, and when **Game Day** came we went in trusting that we'd prepared well and it was time to give our audience the performance (lesson) they deserved!

There are a few other skills I picked up in the MMB that have come in handy, like balancing large objects on top of my 90 degree angled knee, waiting patiently for long periods between being able to eat, and always **being early for every appointment**. The MMB became such a huge part of my life that it's almost difficult to name all the ways that it has influenced me, and I wouldn't have had it any other way."



Giving Back to MVE - Jake Umhoefer

There are two very easy methods of giving the chorus a kickback of online orders you might already be doing daily. With the big shopping season coming soon, it's now the best time to remind us all of these and how they work.

1 - Amazon Smile

This is a VERY easy one for those that already shop at www.amazon.com. It gives us 1/2 of a percent of sales of most items back to the chorus. While it may not seem like a lot, it adds up if we all can get on board with using this. Do you use it to order supplies at work? Just use this new method to help us out. It does not affect your order in any way. Instead of www.amazon.com go to www.smile.amazon.com.

If it's your first time using Smile, it may prompt you to input the charity which you'd like to support. You should simply be able to search for **Midwest Vocal Express** and it will know to give to us.

2 - iGive

This one is a bit more complex, but if you do shopping other places online, this is the one for you to use! By downloading a light software onto your computer or laptop (there's also an App you can download on your smartphones), it gives you the ability to donate to the chorus for shopping at hundreds of different sites online - including Walgreens, Petco, Walmart, and TONS more. AND, it will give you access to exclusive coupons for iGive members only that you can use to shop with, so if nothing else, use it for the discounts!

How it works...

1. Download the App on your smartphone, or to your computer from www.igive.com
2. Follow the prompts to register a username and password
3. Select Midwest Vocal Express as the organization that will benefit from your purchases.
4. Go shopping online like normal!

I've done online shopping at Walgreens, for example. When I go to www.walgreens.com, a small pop up appears to verify that I want to activate the iGive feature and give to MVE with my purchase. It also tells you the rate it will donate back to MVE (in this case, 3.2% from Walgreens...the rates differ per website). After activating, it simply turns into a little triangle icon at the bottom right of my screen to verify that it's still active and MVE will get the proper donation.

Again, if you register for this and have problems or questions please feel free to let me know or give me a call. I hope that if you already shop online that you consider using these methods to help us out!

Monday after the Christmas Show at the VA Hospital & Ronald McDonald House - Jake Umhoefer

Our Mission

The Greendale, WI Chapter of the Barbershop Harmony Society is a fraternity dedicated to providing its members, audience, and community with a cappella entertainment excellence, education in this unique American musical style, and altruistic service.

Our mission includes altruistic service. For several years, the MVE has split up into two groups going out to either the **VA Hospital** or to the **Ronald McDonald House** to entertain. Both groups have had fun, fulfillment, and helped others. This year, our intention is to try to have the whole group go to BOTH locations to have a bigger presence at both. Please plan on doing this for now, and we will continue to keep you posted on the final details as we know them. Such information on both our outing on Monday, December 12 performances and likely an afterglow-ish gathering time will come out soon.

