

Even as you enter a Sound of the Heartland rehearsal, you can feel *it*.

It's what motivates a busy professional to put aside her work, a dedicated mother to part from her family for the evening, a careful teacher to put aside the papers she's grading and a retiree to break for a few hours from her daily routine. It's Thursday night and each of the women showing up for rehearsal know they can expect an experience they don't find elsewhere during the week.

The music is prepared. The interpretation is honed. The choreography is rehearsed. Vocal skills are taught and attended to. Yet, there's something else present that's absolutely intangible. It's the inspiration for rehearsal. It's the sense of joy!

The chorus is not so much a chorus as an ensemble. With 17 members, the ensemble is clearly one of the smaller choruses in the region. But big, full sound sometimes comes in small packages. They break the conventional wisdom that "*less is less*". It's an ensemble that delights in blazing trails. It's a group that has aspirations to be innovative in the Sweet Adelines organization and appealing to those outside of it. All of this is created and nurtured by an intuitive and artful director.

LaDonna Cheatham fell in love with Sweet Adelines Int'l when introduced to a prospective chorus in McPherson, KS, in 1982. That unexpected meeting gave her the opportunity to find out what God knew all along, that she was a performer, singer, director & educator. She learned everything she could about our craft as quickly as someone would teach her and became an official member of Sweet Adelines in 1986. She became the director of McPherson Chorus in Jan 1985, a Certified Director shortly after the program began in 1996, and a Master Director of the current 2010 Region 7 Div. A Champion & Audience Favorite Award Winner, Sound of the Heartland Chorus, in 2007. She has competed internationally both as a director & chorus member and has earned as high as 5th place in a quartet & 3rd place in a chorus. LaDonna has been a member of the Region 7 music staff for several years, makes learning tracks, and coaches choruses and quartets regularly. Even with all that, her first



LaDonna Cheatham

love is her high school sweetheart, Tony. They moved to McPherson from southwest Kansas in 1977 and live there along with their two sons, two daughters, & 4 grandchildren (who are clearly her second love). LaDonna and her husband are the owners of several businesses, one which they are just now starting. They love to go to the lake north of KC, watch & play sports, spend time with their children & grandchildren and are beginning to enjoy some extended traveling.

Originally formed in Valley Center, Kans. in 1971, Sound of the Heartland moved to Newton, Kans. in 2004 and changed its name to reflect a greater diversity of members. More members travel to Newton for rehearsal than live in Newton, but the location is a central one and the ensemble is proud to call Newton its home. The ensemble most recently competed in the 2010 Region 7 Competition, bringing home the championship award for Small Chorus, the Audience Appreciation Award and the Ruby Pike Award, which recognizes the small chorus in the competition with the highest sound score. Prior to that, the chorus was name Region 7 champions and competed at the international level the next year in Hawaii.



caption: Sound of the Heartland Chorus competing in 2010 in Region 7

Distinctive and inviting, the ensemble is creating a campaign to raise awareness both on the local and state levels and invite other women to join in membership. It's a special blend of friendship, spirit, and drive toward excellence that appeals to our new friends. However, the business of the ensemble is never more important than protecting our one priority – producing a sound so harmonized that it brings joy to everyone who hears it. It's a sound each woman knows she cannot create alone. It must be created with others.

Reaching out to singers in the area, the ensemble is hosting an a cappella singing contest for area-wide contestants this summer. Families, friends and seasoned singers from across the region will all be invited to compete for prizes. For Sound of the Heartland, it's a way of making new acquaintances with like-minded singers. Later in October, the community will have the opportunity to see the ensemble's fall show, highlighting the more playful and comedic side of the group.

There's more to hear and see., so we extend a warm invitation to others to visit us in Newton. You'll see that we enjoy the support and encouragement of family and friends, which makes the opportunity to share the sound of joy all the more sweet.



caption: Sue Moore and LaDonna Cheatham preparing script for fall show

REHEARSALS:

Thursdays, 7 – 9:30 p.m.

Trinity Heights UMC

12th and Boyd

Newton, KS 67114

Membership: Sue Moore

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