

OUTSIDE THE BOX
FEATURING AREA STUDENTS GOING

BEYOND THE ORDINARY

BY JULIE WALKER

Dalton Hackert, Natalie Nikkel, and Emily Rozendaal



Three local youth perform with

IOWA YOUTH CHORUS

A trio of local vocal artists in the making has taken their love of music to the next level. These three young talented singers, Dalton Hackert, Natalie Nikkel, and Emily Rozendaal, have participated in the Pella Outreach Choir of the Iowa Youth Chorus (IYC) for a combined five years.

Dalton, a fifth grader at Lynnville-Sully, is the son of Steve and Diane Hackert of Sully. Natalie is a fourth grader at L-S and the daughter of Jared and Stacey Nikkel of Sully. Emily is the daughter of Duane and Dia Rozendaal of Sully and a sixth grader at L-S.

The three have made the weekly trip to Pella for the opportunity to participate in a children's choir, furthering their understanding of music through the study and performance of fine choral music. They are also learning the fundamentals of vocal technique, unison and two-part music reading, and performance skills.

Emily enjoys the atmosphere at the rehearsals, "I like the environment and people, we are learning to sing and use our voices better," she said. "In school, not everyone wants to sing, but at IYC, everyone is there because they enjoy singing."

Dalton, Natalie, and Emily have great respect for their choir director, Mr. Joseph Tangen. Tangen also serves as the middle school vocal director at Pella Community Schools.

"After a performance, Mr. Tangen always goes over what we did wrong and helps us correct it, and he always compliments us on what we did right," explained Dalton.

"Mr. Tangen pays attention to each individual, not just the group," admired Emily. "When he is teaching us to enunciate, he always tells us never to sacrifice quality for quantity."

Both Natalie and Dalton like Mr. Tangen because he is always happy and patient. They are surprised he never raises his voice.

IYC believes that a life-long love of music is one of the most important legacies that can be given to a child. According to Kristen Stanton, Artistic/Executive Director of IYC, the choir has been providing young singers in central Iowa with a world-class choral education for over 30 years.

IYC developed the Outreach Choir concept in the fall of 2004 to offer students ages 8-12 in rural



communities the opportunity to pursue vocal music alongside peers from across central Iowa who wish to develop and broaden their talents and skills.

"The most unique thing about the outreach choirs is that students audition and attend rehearsal with no tuition costs. The Pella Outreach Choir is offered tuition-free through a generous grant from the Fred Maytag Family Foundation so that all children in the community are eligible to participate. Singers pay a modest registration fee for each semester they are enrolled," commented Stanton. "We currently host Outreach Choirs in the communities of Newton and Pella."

Dedicated to bringing the highest level of artistic training to the youth of central Iowa, IYC provides a nurturing environment where young singers can explore the depth and beauty of choral music. The educational objectives of the IYC choral training program aim to develop skills in choral singing, music theory, and artistic creativity/expression and style, all while having fun!

"It's so much fun when you don't feel like you're just one voice singing alone. I like singing in different harmonies, too," exclaimed Natalie.

All three members of this trio agreed that one of their favorite things about the weekly rehearsals was the trip to Pella and back home.

"It was fun to get to know each other," explained Emily. "We would talk and sing and laugh the entire trip."

Over the last two years, the Pella Outreach Choir has performed at the Pella Opera House, the Iowa Historical Museum, an Iowa Energy basketball game, the annual IYC Spring Sing concert, and the annual IYC Candy Cane concert.

"It makes you smile to hear the applause of the audience and get a standing ovation," exclaimed Dalton.

"I think IYC has changed me. I'm a little more aware of what it takes to perform," explained Natalie. "You feel a little more professional because everyone is wearing the same uniform, and the music is more challenging than at school."

"Natalie has always been a singer, she sings all the time! We have a video of her singing when she was only 18 months old," explained her mother, Stacey. "It has been a great experience for her and I would definitely recommend it to other parents."

Dalton believes the experience has given him more self-confidence.

"Dalton loves all the 'boy stuff' like soccer, playing with his coon dog, and using the computer, but I like the way choir has helped him become a more well-rounded

Emily Rozendaal, Dalton Hackert, and Natalie Nikkel have all sung in the Iowa Youth Chorus.



Dalton Hackert sings with the Iowa Youth Chorus. He enjoys hearing the audience's applause and getting a standing ovation.

person," explained Dalton's mother, Diane. "He has learned responsibility and the hard work that it takes to prepare to perform."

Although the trio is taking a break from choir this semester due to family schedules, each plans to sing with the choir again.

"I would tell my friends that if you like to sing, you should join Iowa Youth Chorus. You get to sing with other people who like to sing, and then you get to be friends with them. It is a lot more fun than music class in school," explained Dalton.

For IYC members, one of the favorite parts of each concert is participating in the closing song as they sing a prayer of blessing for the audience. Dalton thinks it is cool when people in the audience who have been past members of the choir come up to join in the IYC signature song at the conclusion of the program.

The IYC signature song is an Irish blessing titled, "Blessing," written by Katie Moran Bart:

"May the road rise up to meet you; may the wind be always at your back.

"May the sun shine warm upon your face, and the rains fall soft upon your fields.

"Until we meet again my friend, may God hold you in the palm of His hand."

IOWA YOUTH CHORUS

Are you thinking of someone who would be a good fit for the Iowa Youth Chorus? If so, you may

contact IYC Artistic/Executive Director Kristen Stanton at 515-262-8312, ext. 2 for more information.

Do you know an area student who goes beyond the ordinary? We would love to share their story! Please contact Julie at Hometown Press with your story tip at julie@hometownpressia.com.