

High Five Choir rocks out at concert in Peoria

High Five Choir supports students of all abilities in song and dance

by Maggie Curry

On Friday Jan. 27, before sunrise, thirty-six High Five Choir members met at New Trier to board a Peoria-bound coach bus that wouldn't return until 6 pm that night.

The students all woke up extra early for this excursion to perform at the Illinois Music Educators Conference (IMEC) to show music teachers from all across the state what High Five Choir does.

High Five Choir was founded here at New Trier twelve years ago, as an activity where students and staff could volunteer during their lunch periods. Two years later, it became a course option for students.

Currently, High Five has 72 students enrolled in it.

This was the third year that High Five performed at the IMEC. They have also been invited in 2009 and 2014. Susan Vaughn, director of High Five Choir, expressed how important it was to continue presenting the work done in High Five Choir because the methods they use in the choir are ever evolving.

"We are really getting away from an us-and-them model. This is a blended choir of students of all abilities," said Vaughn. High Five Choir started with a buddy



Vicky Berman and Jane McDonald participate in High Five Choir, celebrating differences in song and dance. | Segal

system where a student from the special education program would be paired with someone from the general education program. After realizing the divide it brought upon the students, they changed the system to make it a more united choir for all students.

The choir offers students who aren't very verbal or don't like singing the ability to participate in the choir by playing instruments, signing to certain songs, incorporating dances, or even using iPad programs.

Junior Adam Weber is a member of the choir that takes up these other opportunities to participate

in performances by playing the tambourine, percussions, and other instruments. Weber said, "I don't like singing too much. I get to play in the ensemble."

We are also talking about embracing students of color and sexual identity and religious affiliation.

At the IMEC, Vaughn and

New Trier Speech Pathologist Vicki Murphy gave a presentation about the choir. "I felt compelled to share High Five's model and message with [her] colleagues so that they can create this opportunity their students, their school, and their community," said Vaughn.

Murphy and Vaughn are not the only ones who feel the need to share how amazing the choir is.

Students continually tell people how great of an experience it is.

Junior Sophia McGowan joined the choir this year. "I have many friends who were in the High Five Choir last year, who never stopped

talking about it and how much fun it is, so they inspired me to join," said McGowan. Now that she's in the choir, High Five has made her day "1000 percent better."

Senior Therese Cooney has been in the choir for three years, and High Five has made its mark in her life. "It's probably been the best experience I've had at New Trier, being in High Five, and I can't imagine high school without it," said Cooney.

High Five created an environment where all people are accepted and everyone feels united.

"No matter who you are, High Five is a place where you can express yourself and learn about music, as well as create amazing friendships," said Cooney.

Vaughn wants High Five Choir to not just be a choir model in Illinois, but all across the country. She has hopes of getting their music video to "Can't Stop The Feeling" by Justin Timberlake to go viral, and one day get the choir all the way to The Ellen Degeneres Show, so the entire country can see the unity and work being done. Vaughn believes the choir does more than just unify general and special education students, but it unifies all students.

"We are not only talking about students of various abilities, but about embracing students of color and sexual identity and ethnicity and religious affiliation. We welcome and embrace and accept our truly diverse population of students that make up High Five," said Vaughn.

SWEETS provides home for girls interested in STEM

SWEETS empower female students to combat stereotypes of a male-dominated field

by Eleanor Kaplan

As hundreds of students pour out the doors at the end of the school day, juniors Maddie Joseph and Mia Lecinski, along with a few dozen other bright, like-minded young women, make their way to the science laboratory.

Every Monday, the group gathers in the classroom for SWEETS club, also known as the Society of Women in Engineering, Entrepreneurship, Technology, and Science.

Led by chemistry teacher William Loris, they partake in hands-on activities, learn about STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics)-based careers, and listen to lectures from influential women in science fields.

Joseph and Lecinski, who participate in swimming and cross country respectively as well as many other activities, do not fit the "science kid" stereotype. They hope to show that science and extended learning is for everybody.

According to the National Institute of Math and Science, New Trier is one of just a few schools that have a science club geared specifically towards women.

Lecinski said, "[The club is] about teaching us more about engineering and there's the added element of not enough girls doing science or even knowing about it." The club often has guest

speakers come in. Most recently, Go Green Wilmette founder, Beth Drucker, talked to the club about entrepreneurship.

In 2014, Drucker earned the Distinguished Citizen Award from District 39 for her environmental activism and has since been an important member of the community.

The group also discusses different scientific news and articles, tutors children about science topics in Evanston, and experiments in the lab.

"Last week, we played with liquid nitrogen," Lecinski said. The group also takes part in yearly "disassembly parties" said Loris, in which the club brings in electronic devices to take apart and understand the mechanics inside them.

SWEETS club is led by an experienced group of long-time members, including Joseph, who joined the club in her sophomore year.

"I feel like one of the bigger issues facing our generation is that most STEM fields are very underpopulated by women, and we're the future. So, the more women we can get involved in STEM, the better," Joseph said.

According to a survey done in 2011 by the Department of Commerce, women make up just 25 percent of workers in STEM fields. There are more women in fields related to life sciences than in the so-called "hard" sciences.

In sociology, psychology, and health-related occupations, women make up more than 50 percent of the work force. The survey also states that fields that are more related to technology and physical sciences, like physics, mathematics, chemistry, and computer science, are male-dominated, with just 13 percent of women working in them.

Loris believes this inequality within STEM fields begins at a young age.

"High school boys can be very rambunctious and the high school girls can be a little intimidated, so I think it's important that they have this inspiration," he said.

In his classes, added Loris, he makes an effort to get girls involved often to show them that they can do science just as well as the boys. Although the school makes an effort to encourage women to pursue STEM fields, some parents are still unsure about their daughters pursuing certain careers.

Mathematics department chair Mary Lappan said, "The place I see the difference is when I'm talking with parents who sometimes question their daughter's interest in engineering."

Once in high school, the separation of interests between males and females tends to increase.

While the majority of math and science courses have a relatively equal ratio of male to female students, in some high-level classes, such as AP Computer Science and AP Physics C, there can be up to 3 or 4 times as many male students as female students, according to Lappan.

This gap only grows in the transition from high school to college, where men are 30 percent more likely to obtain an engineering degree than women.

One of the main missions of SWEETS club is to inspire women to pursue their interests in STEM fields. Loris said of the club's members, "They have partnered with Girl Scouts and brownie troops. They're awesome role models for these younger girls."

Valentines Day is sweet for some, tart for others

Students find a variety of ways to celebrate Valentines Day

by Alyssa Pak

Whether they have a "significant other" or not, there are a number of ways that students choose to take part in Valentine's Day.

Valentine's Day is sometimes referred to as an uneventful Hallmark holiday, whereas in middle school, excited kids would jump at the chance to pass out corny Valentines and candy. Even now, some students find ways to celebrate.

For junior Juliette Lewis, a part of her Valentine's Day came in the form of shoes. "My boyfriend gave me my gift early, so that was exciting," she said, wearing a new pair of Adidas Superstars.

For some students with boyfriends or girlfriends outside of school, Valentine's Day can be hard to celebrate, especially since it falls on a school day. "I like Valentine's Day, but I don't really do much for it since my boyfriend lives in a different district," said junior Rachel Mehlman.

Another conflict that can get in the way of students doing something for the day is the fact that it is on a Tuesday.

Between homework and extracurriculars, it can be hard to find the time to celebrate. "I have a boyfriend, but I'm not celebrating Valentine's Day, mostly because it falls on a school day this year," said sophomore Katrina Abuls.

Even for students without a boyfriend or girlfriend, there are plenty of ways to have a

good Valentine's Day. "I will be celebrating Valentine's Day this year because I think it's one of the best holidays, even though I'll be celebrating it alone at my house," said senior Peter Schmisek.

Students use the day more for celebrating love between friends, not necessarily for significant others.

Sophomore Emma Citow said, "I'll probably be celebrating it by going out with my friends."

Sophomore Faith Stineman said that she'll also be celebrating with her friends and family. "You don't need to be in a relationship to celebrate Valentine's Day with the ones you love. Valentine's Day is a fun and happy day for everyone."

Other students, like junior Mari Lariviere, are choosing to put the day to good use and are celebrating by giving back.

"The only way I'm celebrating the holiday is by working with my mom to compile a list of places to donate to, just for fun, because instead of spending money on Valentine's, we can donate," Lariviere said.

Many students struggle to find the necessity in spending their money over a holiday that lacks personal significance. "I think that it's an unnecessary holiday that is now only celebrated so that boyfriends will get their girlfriends gifts and so that couples can do something special," said sophomore Rachel Hsu.

Although some students choose not to celebrate because they don't see a point, a majority of students still celebrate by spending time with their friends and family, regardless of whether or not they have a boyfriend or girlfriend, bringing new meaning to a traditional holiday.