

NCDA Fall Awards

In November, NCDA recognized two of its own with the presentation of the Outstanding Young Choral Director Award to Nathan Helzer and the presentation of the Outstanding Choral Director Award to Dr. Marty Wheeler Burnett.

The Outstanding Young Choral Director Award is to be given annually to a very deserving young choral director in Nebraska. It is to honor those young professionals that have demonstrated commitment to our profession and, most importantly, to our singers during their first ten years of teaching.

Award winners are to be exemplars of emerging professionals who maintain high performance and literature standards and who actively participate in ACDA/NCDA activities through their attendance.

This year's award recipient of the Outstanding Young Choral Director Award, Nathan Helzer, is the choral director at Ogallala Middle and High Schools. He received the following comments in nomination for this award:



He gives selflessly of his time at school by teaching 6th, 7th, and 8th grade choirs, high school mixed choir and concert choir. He directs the school musical, co-sponsors the Tri-M chapter, and has served as the Quiz Bowl sponsor. He shows leadership outside of the school being a clinician for multiple Festival Choirs, and presenting and presiding for sessions at NCDA and NMEA conventions. "He has been my son's music instructor for the past two years in 7th and 8th grade and now as a Freshman. Music has always been a very important part of our family and he has inspired my son's joy and love for music and encouraged him to continue to be involved in choral music. I have seen an increase in the number of students participating in choral music in our school. His students are engaged and excited about singing the songs and participating in the dance routines. The number of students that participate is a reflection of the desire of students to be involved in something dynamic happening at the school. He is engaged in his own learning as he expects his students to be engaged in their learning of music and in performances." "I observed how his students are excited about choral music and about him in the way they helped with the organization of the Clinic and the way they spoke of him in break times. They were very positive and excited to be in his program. They also performed musically and followed him closely. His ability to inspire was obvious."

"I have been so impressed on how involved he wants to be an influence in our organization. He has jumped right in as the high school R&S and has started discussions about issues that high school choral directors might have on the website and on Facebook." "What has been most impressive about him is his desire to take music education to a new level. He is innovative. He has the students conduct the pieces of music so that the students can find the musical phrasing for themselves. We can all be inspired by the example that he gives as he paves the way for music educators to follow."

The Outstanding Choral Director Award is to be given annually to a very deserving choral director in Nebraska. It is to honor those professionals that have made a commitment to singers in Nebraska for ten years or more. Award winners are to be exemplars of teachers who maintain high performance and

literature standards and who actively participate in ACDA/NCDA activities through their attendance and leadership. They are also to be models of those who actively promote choral music in the community.

This year's award recipient was Dr. Marty Wheeler Burnett, the choral director and Director of Fine Arts at College of Saint Mary in Omaha, as well as the Director of Music at Trinity Episcopal Cathedral. She received the following comments in nomination for this award:

She has built a choral music program at College of Saint Mary where her choirs have toured Italy, sung in 2 choral festivals at Carnegie Hall, participated in a service learning trip to New Orleans, and performed across Nebraska and in Minneapolis/St. Paul. The choirs will be performing in Chicago in April, and tour to Israel is planned for 2013. Over half of CSM students are the first in their families to attend college, and over half come from low income backgrounds, so the choral program has opened the door to the arts for many students. (The choir only had 3 students when she arrived!) She founded a community chorus, Musica Sacra, whose members enjoy singing sacred choral masterworks and support music education at College of Saint Mary, performing regularly with the college choirs. She created and directed the Rae Whitney Hymn Festival in 2009 which included a lecture, workshop, and hymn festival in Omaha featuring musical settings of texts by the Nebraska hymn poet; this was followed by a tour including performances of the program in Grand Island and Scottsbluff. In addition, she seeks to find partnerships for the arts with colleagues, local arts organizations, touring ensembles. For example, bringing New York Polyphony to Omaha through partnerships between the college and Trinity Cathedral, co-sponsorship of concerts with St. Cecilia Cathedral. She has won Inspiring Excellence Award at CSM (highest faculty honor) and the Job Well Done Award (voted on by the Student Senate) which indicates that she is held in respect by her colleagues and by her students as well.

Congratulations and continued success to Nathan Helzer and Dr. Marty Wheeler Burnett!

Submitted by NCDA President, Matthew Harden.