



International Medalist  
**GREAT NORTHERN UNION**  
**CHORUS**



HILLTOP CHAPTER • SPEBSQSA

10,000 LAKES DIVISION – LAND O’ LAKES DISTRICT

Vol. 8 - Issue #7

**GNU’s NEWS**

November 2003

**Hilltop Quartets Sweep the District Contest**

The Great Northern Union competed in the fall district contest held in Rochester, MN on October 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>. The GNU was well represented with 9 quartets and the chorus, 69 strong, competing. Another 4 GNU quartets performed on the Association of District Champions show and Excalibur did a performance on Saturday evening.

The chorus competition was very close with Greendale’s Midwest Vocal Express chorus edging out the GNU by 12 points to take the championship for the 2<sup>nd</sup> year in a row. The GNU chorus sang their hearts out with 2 tear jerker ballads while the MVE did their green army men set from Montreal. Both choruses qualified for the international competition in Louisville, KY in July, 2004.

In the quartet competition, **Nouveau** took top honors and 3 other GNU quartets scored in the top 5. **PRISM** took the District Novice Championship keeping the traveling trophy in the GNU’s “house” for another year.



2003 LOL District Champions, **Nouveau**  
 Dave Boyd (bass), Jim Olson (tenor).  
 Duane Rygg (baritone), Tony Blackwood (lead),



2003 District Novice Champions, **PRISM**  
 Steve Nolte (tenor), Cleon Wahlin (lead)  
 Darren Hoehne (bass), Alan Matchinsky (bari)



Seniors Champions, **Down State Express**  
 Ed Wirtz (tenor), Bruce Odell (lead)  
 Gary Rogness, (bass), Dick Treptow (bari)

**CHAPTER LEADERS**

President	Jim Higgins	952-848-0831(H)
Immediate Past President	Roger Meyer	763-476-7382(H)
Secretary	Dave Miller	952-432-7048(H)
Treasurer	John Babbs	952-474-9404(H)
Performance VP	Marty Monson Erik Dove	651-330-7587(H) 651-905-1605(H)
Marketing VP	Loring Harrop	952-942-0845(H)
Membership VP	Don Knecht	612-926-3868(H)
Fund Development Vice President	Harvey Berwin	651-698-3515(H)
Mem. At Large	Art VanDeWater	
Mem. At Large	Dan Vander Ploeg	612-339-2596(H)
Mem. At Large	Bill Lydecker	715-426-7756(H)
Mem at Large	Chuck McKown	952-469-2575(H)
Chorus Mgr. VP	Kent Erlandson	952-944-9934(H)
Presentation	Roger Stanfield	952-440-3678(H)
Librarian	Ken Gilmore	651-770-1536(H)
Sunshine	Keith Fransen	651-438-1342(H)
Uniforms	Ron Geldert	763-529-4417(H)

**DIRECTOR**

Pete Benson 701-642-2484(H)

**ASSISTANT DIRECTOR**

Scott Kvigne 952-431-0596(H)

**SECTION LEADERS**

Tenor	Tom Matchinsky	612-743-9345(H)
Lead	Tony Blackwood	952-922-4564(H)
Bari	Scott Kvigne	952-431-0596(H)
Bass	Mark Jurgensen	507-534-6543(H)

**BULLETIN EDITORS**

Roger and Theresa Meyer 763-476-7382(H)  
Email: roger.theresa@meyer.net

Steve and Shirley Anderson 952-894-9030(H)  
Email: sander1159@aol.com

Each GNU's NEWS issue is an official publication of the Hilltop Chapter, 10,000 Lakes Division, LOL District, of SPEBSQSA, Inc. Bulletin material may be contributed by chapter members, copied from Society publications, or may be borrowed from other chapter bulletins. All articles will be credited to the author. Articles not carrying a by-line have been written by the editor, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the officers of this chapter.

**The Director's Cut**

It's hard to believe that I have already had the privilege of being your director for a whole year. Actually it seems like we have crammed a heck of a lot of stuff into one year. I think that our rate of growth has been tremendous and I look forward to even more in the next twelve months.

I already shared some of my thoughts about the District contest but I wanted to reiterate my appreciation for your hard work and focus leading up to our time on stage. I knew it was going to be a good day from the moment Tom started his echo clapping routine. It was absolutely



precise. Then, when we started to rehearse, you seemed to be grasping concepts immediately and responding to tiniest nuances in my conducting. It occurred to me that if you were able to give that kind of "ready room" focus and energy on a weekly basis that there would be no stopping us. If that kind of focus becomes the norm, imagine the level of intensity on the actual contest or annual show day. Wow, I hate to think of it!

Thank you for giving your all in Rochester and thanks for a great first year! I am learning so much and having the time of my life. You ain't seen nothin' yet!

PETE



## Presidents Corner

Gentlemen, we all know we have just had a mountaintop experience! We also know that there are higher mountains to climb! Pete's plan is coming together. We are learning to sing in "the model". When that becomes part of our very being there will be no stopping us, not even a judge.



What fun it was in Rochester. Are you ready for more fun? We are more than just a competition chorus; we are a performing chorus too. Now as we prepare for our annual show, we will apply all the new skills that we have learned in recent months. We will perfect our songs and learn new ones. We have an opportunity to make three thousand people happy on January 24<sup>th</sup>. We can't do that unless the house is full *twice*. Ticket sales have begun and I hope each of you will take the challenge to help us sell out twice. One member told me that he is taking twenty tickets and what ever he doesn't sell he is going to buy and give away. This is going to be a great show with the Happiness Emporium and Four Voices.

I would like you to *tell* (not sell) your friends about it. Don't worry whether they buy or not, just tell them about the show. Just say: "Our chorus is bringing in a wonderful young quartet from Tennessee for our annual show. If you are going to be in town, you really shouldn't miss it." Then go on to another topic. Some of these folks will say: "I'd love to come but I'll be out of town." Don't worry about it. Others will say: "Let me check with my wife." At that point ask if it's okay to check with them in a week. Believe it or not, some will just say, "Give me four tickets for the evening show". Start the process **NOW**. Do you know how much fun it is to sing to a full house? Of course you do!

The word is spreading that "something's coming and it's gonna be great" (*that something is the New GNU*). It will be even greater with more great singers. Don't forget to recruit. Invite great singers to the show and also to the guest night that will be scheduled soon after the show. The last couple of guest nights were very well attended and we got a couple of new singers. We need you to do that again. But really, every Thursday should be a guest night.

This chorus is so much fun, I can't wait until Thursday comes each week!

## This Is Not the Pinnacle!

If you missed rehearsal on the Thursday immediately after the District contest, you missed a great time. The rehearsal was as intense as any time prior to contest. Remember our resolve that even rehearsals are performances! We began learning a new up-tune for International. The time is now to stay on board for both the annual show as well as Louisville.

We also took quite awhile at that rehearsal to bask in glow of our accomplishments at the contest. Time was given over to a rather extensive conversation of the great memories and great expectations for the Great Northern Union chorus. Just a few of the highlights of that time included special recognition to Roger Stanfield for his passionate motivation which enabled us to sing our hearts out. Pete Benson was given a big vote of confidence for all that he has accomplished with us; as was the new Performance Team which is headed up by Erik Dove and Marty Monson.

Following are some of the comments by the leaders and membership: "This is not the Pinnacle", "There was sheer unity", "There was a judge... we locked eyes... (it was as if he was saying)... 'I know what you are thinking' - we connected as men". Later, someone quoted a much echoed sentiment "music is the highest form of communication" and from a member that has sung with another champion chorus, "this was completely different".

One judge informally but sincerely had told us after the contest that he felt GNU deserved a strong 93. He added that he was crying at such poignant ballads. He said "I found myself thinking 'what a blubbering idiot'; then I looked up and saw everybody else crying too!". Men, we did ourselves proud.

The tone of the evening was that although everyone would have rather achieved a first place finish, it was enough, for this time in our history, to have achieved the top score in singing and that "this is not the pinnacle." The engine has started



and many higher peaks are ahead. The time is now to prepare a strong set for International. "Lou-a-vulle", bring um on! We are gonna have some fun!

If you have been inactive for a few rounds with GNU, please consider participating **now** for a stellar annual show in January and then continue on for Kentucky in July! All members please put your thinking caps on and bring down your best candidates to join us.





In addition to all of the competing quartets, GNU was represented by many of the quartets on the Friday night ADC show. These included (clockwise from the top) **Class Reunion** (1983) **Happiness Emporium** (1973), **Breakpoint** (1998), **Bravo!** (2000),  
And **Excalibur** brought back John Korby and Greg Volk in their final performance for the district on Saturday evening.





**Apex** (left to right)  
 Keith Olson (tenor), Jim Larson (lead),  
 Steve McDonald (bass) Tom Puent (bari)



**Live Wire** – (left to right)  
 Brent Buresh (tenor) Steve Anderson (bass)  
 Steve Hardy (lead) Scott Kvigne (bari)

**Quartet Contest Results**

1 <sup>st</sup> place - Nouveau	10 <sup>th</sup> place – Special Alliance
2 <sup>nd</sup> place – Apex	12 <sup>th</sup> place – Double Down
3 <sup>rd</sup> place – Live Wire	13 <sup>th</sup> place – Mood Swing
4 <sup>th</sup> place – Vanguard (Greendale)	15 <sup>th</sup> place - PRISM
5 <sup>th</sup> place – MSP	

*A big thank you to **Ron Middlestad** for providing all the pictures of the groups on stage in Rochester*



**MSP** (left to right)  
 Jim Emery (bari), Steve Case (bass)  
 Mike Laurel (lead), Tom Matchinsky (tenor)



**Mood Swing** (left to right)  
 Tom Semple (tenor) Brad Berget (lead)  
 Daryl Mortek (bass) Albin Peterson (bari)



## Judges Comments by Roger Meyer

As many of you know, I'm a certified administration judge and have been for nearly 20 years. I wrote the computerized scoring program that the Society uses for all contests to log in the scores and prepare the reports for the audience, contestants, and judges. In that capacity, I've gotten to know many fine men who work for us as judges.

So at contests, I often go up to the judging area to renew those acquaintances and verify that the Contest Administrators have had no trouble with the scoring program.

This past weekend in Rochester was no exception. Saturday afternoon after our chorus had completed meeting with 3 judges in our evaluation sessions, I wandered into the judging area. There, I found Tom Woodall, one of the Singing Category judges on the Rochester judging



panel, who I've known for many years. He was busy sorting his score sheets in preparation for meeting with some chorus in round 2 of the evaluations.

When Tom saw me he stopped his work and greeted me warmly. He said our chorus performance was absolutely excellent. He said he gave us a score of 91 and 93 and said he would stand by those numbers with anyone. He said, "That performance was the finest chorus performance since..." and then he paused while he thought about all the chorus performances he's seen over the many years of judging. After a long pause, he continued, "since I saw the winning performance of the Vocal Majority at the International Chorus Contest in 1975." Well! That comment was so interesting, I said, "Can I quote you on that, Tom?" And he said, "You bet."

He went on to say that he wished he had gotten our chorus in the evaluations because he wanted to tell us how good the performance was. Finally, he summarized by saying, when he listened to us, he found himself crying. He thought, "What a blubbering idiot I am!" Then he looked up and saw most of the guys on stage also crying. He went on, "And I'm sure it's hard since you've done it so often. And you re-created feelings drawn from life experiences. What a great performance!"

Thanks, guys, it was indeed a great weekend and an absolutely excellent performance.



*Double Down took 12<sup>th</sup> place in Rochester*



Heard at the convention recently: " You do not have to have a music degree to excel in SPEBSQSA. You can get an education through the society". (He meant Harmony College and a host of other opportunities.)



*Perennial district top ten finisher, **Special Alliance***

## From the Judges Pit

***The Great northern Union is very fortunate to count 9 judges and 2 candidate judges among our members. Through this column, we will get advice from these experts on how to improve our individual performance.***



*This is part of an email sent out after a recent Thursday night rehearsal.*

Hi guys,

Thanks for a good rehearsal last night. Thanks, in particular, for getting into the spirit of the lyrics to "When The Midnight Choo-Choo Leaves For Alabam".

As you noticed, we are introducing this song a little differently than usual. Let me give you some background on why.

The method for introducing the song was pioneered by the great Robert Shaw. Shaw was known not just for being an incredible musician, but one of the best organizers ever, with an amazing attention to detail. The results of that organization and attention to detail were groups that had absolutely flawless execution on every number they performed.

One of the Singing judges at the Rochester performance commented on many synchronization and other minor execution errors in the GNU performance. While we have made great strides with the model, it is not yet uniformly adopted. It was this judge that told me about Robert Shaw's methods.

Shaw would first introduce a new song by introducing the lyrics only, much like we did last night. He felt that comfort with those lyrics was essential before moving on to rhythms, notes, and intonation. He would not move forward until such a comfort level with the lyrics was uniform in his group. After the words were well ingrained into each singer, he would then introduce the rhythms (and tempos) into which those lyrics were to be inserted. The lyrics and rhythms would be rehearsed until they also had reached a comfort level before any notes were added. I believe it is Pete's plan next Thursday to add the "Midnight Choo-Choo" rhythms and tempos to the lyrics we learned this week.

Complete comfort with both lyrics and rhythms was the trigger to move on to introducing the notes on top of those lyrics and rhythms. This is really backwards from what the GNU usually done. Focus on the notes has traditionally been the most important thing from the beginning. But Shaw felt that introducing notes, words,

and rhythms all at once (like we have in the past) led to many execution errors with each that would have to be corrected over the repertoire lifetime of the number. Adding notes to lyrics and rhythms that are already comfortably learned leads to a finished product that is better in all three aspects.

The final piece of Shaw's process was to work intonation, part balance, tone colors, and other interpretive factors. These are the components most likely to change as the song's interpretation solidifies to the final product. Deferring to the genius of Robert Shaw, we will be implementing his method in the learning of "Midnight Choo-Choo". Last night the lyrics. Next Thursday the rhythms. The following week learning tapes with notes. Have no fear. This method is perfectly compatible with "the model". In fact, "the model" will make this method easier to do well.



For Shaw's method to have a chance of success, it is important for each of us to commit to each step 100%. It would be easy just to slack off on learning the words, thinking that we'll catch up on the words while we're learning the rhythms. Or the over-achievers of the group (isn't that everybody?!) could just decide on our own to go learn the whole song, words, rhythms, notes, and everything else on our own schedule. Please don't do that. Devote the proper rehearsal time outside of Thursday night rehearsals on the phase we're in. We believe the results will be wonderful if we do. We anticipate that the Louisville judging panel will have glowing comments on the GNU's flawless execution and correspondingly high scores. So, have you rehearsed the lyrics you got last night? If not, take the sheet out and read them through OUT LOUD right now. Make sure your pronunciation focuses strongly on the Mark Hale model. And turn those diphthongs!

Thanks, guys. See you next week! :-)

Jim Emery  
Singing Judge  
Hilltop, MN Great Northern Union Chorus

*Editor's note: I just want to personally thank Jim for his continued hard work in providing us weekly (sometimes daily) email reminders on how to sing better.*

## Members; Get to know 'em

**Marty Monson** has a resume that reaches to the moon! Together with his long time friend and neighbor, Erik Dove, he co-chairs the newly formed Performance Team. You will have no doubt as the suitability of this appointment after you read his biography below.

Marty Monson, tenor, lives with his wife Amy, and little daughter Stefany, in Eagan.. He grew up in Iowa and went to college at Luther in Decorah. He has also lived in Kalamazoo, Michigan

Marty comes from a very musical family. His dad is professor of music and long time barbershopper. The senior Monson sang in a quartet that qualified five times for the International stage. His mom is an avid singer and "cheerleader". His sister Ann has a Master's in vocal performance and has performed around the world. Now she lives in Minneapolis and has her own studio. Some of you have taken lessons from her. Marty's brother Eric is a professional entertainer. He was the baritone of the first Collegiate Quartet champion, "**Water Street Junction**". From there he has travelled the world singing and is currently in the "**Dockside Porters**" quartet performing at Disney Tokyo.

Marty is one of those kids who has never not known barbershopping. He has always attended shows, even as a child. Since the age of 15 he has been an official member, and has been a GNUer since 1991. Additionally he has sung with the **Iowa City Old Capital Chorus** (Central States), the **Mall City Chorus** (Pioneer District); and he has also sung with Mark Slamka, tenor of **PowerPlay**.

He sang under his dad in high school, which at the time was one of the top music programs in the country. They even had a 35 member barbershop chorus in high school! Then, at Luther he sang in the all male freshman chorus; and later under Weston Noble for the other three years. His minor was music, with a major in management. While in Kalamazoo he worked for a music production company, and (wouldn't you know it) his major customer was Disney.

Now, let's look at his quartet history. In high school he was in a quartet called "**School board**". The name came from the "Music Man". This group sang at the invitation of Six Flags in St.Louis for an entire summer during college! That inspired them to compete in Central

States District contest and they got 7th, and also won the Novice award. As it so happened it was the same contest in which "Gas House Gang" won CSD District champion.

Next came "**Top Cats**" in 1993 and "**Marty's Party**" in 1995. Then in 1999, "**Party of Four**". Finally, Dan Schroeder, Dave Roessler, and Mike Faris joined up with Marty in 2001 to form "**Bravo!**", which later became the 2001 LOL District Champions.

Marty is the Vice President of Sales for Glowpoint, Inc., home base is Hillside New Jersey. They provide video conferencing for all markets. (Ed. note: With a product like that I guess the boss can't hardly complain that you live far from New Jersey, right?!)

When asked what attracted him to GNU, he said that his dad mentioned it when he moved to Minneapolis. He remembers singing tags the first night with the Halvorson brothers and Steve McDonald.

Marty says "GNU was meant to be."



*Marty Monson and Wally Brink*

## Our Newest GNU, Wally Brink

Wally was born and raised at Grand Rapids, MN. He has 3 older siblings and five nieces and nephews. Still a country boy at heart, he likes to go home to his parent's dairy farm to get away from it all. He now lives in uptown on Lake Calhoun. Previously he lived in Lanesboro, MN

working as a stage manager at a professional theater. He attended Luther college at Decorah Iowa for 4 years. While at Luther he sang in the Nordic Choir along with various jazz, chamber and men's choirs. And during his 3rd year he took an opportunity to study in Nottingham England. While there, he traveled Europe.. And, get this, he sang with the Cathedral Church choir of Nottingham, England! As if that is not enough, he plays fiddle, mandolin, and tuba.

Kari is his significant other and they have been together as a couple for four years. They met first year college and have been part of each other's lives since. They like to travel together, go to sporting events (Go Twins!) and take in theater.

Continued on page 9



**Wally, Cont. from page 8**

Wally is a corporate trainer for Fidelity National. Previously he was the above-mentioned stage manager for the Commonwealth Theater Company in Lanesboro, MN. He says he is not an actor but does have a passion for theater.

He joined the GNU in April of this year. He was referred by a barbershopper from New York who had worked at the Lanesboro Theater. This man had seen GNU at International for many years and felt Wally would enjoy the experience. Wally got the GNU web address from which he contacted Jim Higgins, and the rest is history.

Regarding his GNU experience he says the following: " GNU was an experience that just fell into my lap. I did not know what to expect when I showed up that early spring evening. To say the least, it surprised me. I was not only looking for a chance to sing but rather looking for community. Community is very important to me and it was something lacking when I moved to the Twin Cities. I've always been a small town boy and lived in places where everyone knows everyone else. That is hard to find in the TC but GNU has given me that community for which I had been searching. From singing every Thursday night on the risers to belting tags in the echo of the JCC halls to competition to socializing with the Afterglow crowd to spilling ourselves to our audience in competition, this has been one of the best experiences and I have only been here six months! " I remember also the Twins Game. I went to so many games this year where the Anthem was so (badly) sung. I was proud to be a part of the performance that did justice to the song".

As for jobs within GNU, he related: "I am currently helping Loring with Special Guest Marketing and greater MN outreach". Regarding quartets, he is "in negotiations" for a novice quartet. Go Wally!

In conclusion, he offers the following: "I am currently looking for a progressive church in the Minneapolis area. I was raised Lutheran ("Missouri sinner") but am not limited to any denomination".

So if one of you guys wants another choir member, Wally could be your man!

**GNU Hotline ... Use it!**



**763-476-7383**

**Comment from the Treasurer**

John Babbs

The board has been watching expenses closely the past couple months, as we anticipated a low fund status by the end of the year. Early ticket sales for the January show has already gotten us over the hump, and it looks like we will be covered without any emergency action. So, while our actual fund balance changes daily, it appears we are not going to zero, as we feared.



The annual show is, by far, the largest fund-raiser for the GNU. This one event is vital to our financial stability. However, smaller events make a difference too. CD sales for example are another important source of income. Last year we had enough CD sales to pay half of our yearly rent for the JCC and other facilities. Also remember that it is a long time between the annual show and the Show of Champions, our next largest fund raising event.

Conclusion? Follow the lead of Loring Harrop, our Marketing guru, and sell/buy GNU stuff for Christmas gifts, for business or company gifts, for stocking stuffers, or simply for charity...buy a couple tickets and give them to someone who probably cannot afford to come to our show. But a simple caution: don't buy tickets and not use them...the empty seats in the house look bad. Buy them and give them away.




**Coming Events**

COTS School	January, 17-18, 2004
Annual Show	January, 24, 2004
Recording Session	Feb / March
Singing Valentines	Feb. 13-14, 2004

# Hilltop Chapter Quartets

**Got Music?**  
Have a



**Nouveau**

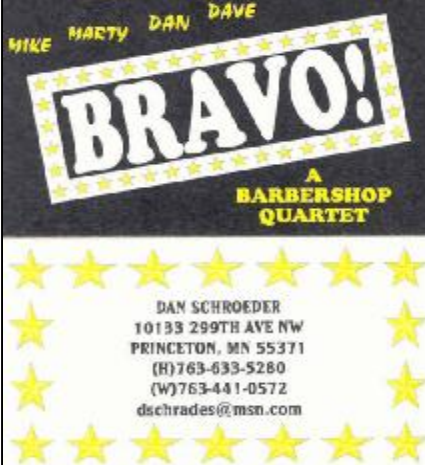
Experience  
with

**Dave Tony  
Duane Jim**

A Barbershop Quartet

Contact: Jim Olson  
14466 Everest Avenue  
Apple Valley, MN 55124  
Phone: 952-431-3110  
email: olsoncrew@aol.com

MIKE MARTY DAN DAVE



**BRAVO!**  
A BARBERSHOP QUARTET

DAN SCHROEDER  
10133 299TH AVE NW  
PRINCETON, MN 55371  
(R) 763-633-5280  
(W) 763-441-0572  
dschrades@msn.com



—ROD JOHNSON - Lead— JIM FOY - Bass—  
—RICK ANDERSON - Bari— BOB DOWNA - Tenor—

**HAPPINESS  
EMPORIUM**  
BARBERSHOP QUARTET

www.HappinessEmporium.com  
CONTACT: Rod Johnson  
1308 Blue Phlox Court  
Northfield, Minnesota 55057  
507.645.5750

E-mail: dougmilr@aol.com Tax I.D. #41-1903683

*Special Alliance*

GLENN, DAVE, LANCE & DOUG (Barbershop Quartet)

Contactman: DOUG MILLER 4622 Rutledge St.  
512-447-8265 Prior Lake, MN 55372

Jim Tom  
Keith Steve



**APEX**

Contact: Keith Olson  
4558 368th Ave.  
Montevideo, MN 56265  
(320) 269-5142  
ksolson@charter.net

Ellis Jones, Tenor Bruce Gray, Lead



**MAGIC**  
Barbershop Harmony & Sleight of Hand

507-934-2372  
bgray@gustavus.edu

Don Miller, Baritone Denny Jackson, Bass

Albin Brad Daryl Tom

**MOODswing**

Barbershop Quartet  
Mortek Productions Daryl 651-426-7700 mortekpro@wans.net

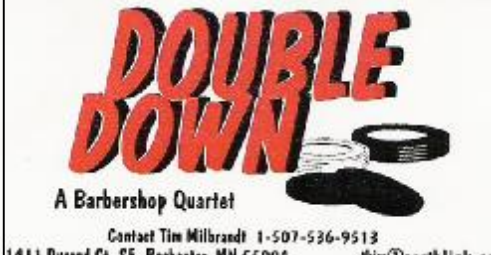
ENTERTAINING SINCE 1972



**The ROADRUNNERS**  
FOR THE GOOD TIMES

CONTACT  
RICH SLIND (W) 651-222-2635 (Also Fax)  
(H) 651-739-6174  
P.O. BOX 25257, ST. PAUL MN 55125

**DOUBLE  
DOWN**



A Barbershop Quartet

Contact Tim Milbrandt 1-507-536-9513  
1411 Durand Ct. SE, Rochester, MN 55904 tkim@earthlink.net



Before we go.....



The Great Northern Union Chorus meets every Thursday from 7:00pm to 10:00pm, at the Greater Minneapolis Jewish Community Center, 4330 Cedar Lake Road in St. Louis Park. Diving North on Hwy. 100 take Cedar Lake Rd. exit and follow to end; driving south, take 394 W, exit on Park Place, which runs in to Cedar Lake Rd. The telephone number at rehearsals is 952-377-8330.

“Early-Bird” rehearsals are held at 6:00pm for practicing S.P. moves. Members are urged to call the GNU Hotline at 763-476-7383 weekly for the latest word on rehearsals, performances, and other pertinent information. Also find us on the web at [www.gnunion.com](http://www.gnunion.com)