

ACDA is about affirmation and encouragement

President's Message March 15, 2008

[Leora Schwitters](#), President, WA-ACDA



Welcome to the WA-ACDA web site! As you peruse this wonderful resource Howard Meharg has assembled for us, be sure to check the Unison archives, the new 'History of WA-ACDA' and submit your events to our calendar page. We invite you to join us if you are not already a member. This organization has by far been the most important to me professionally of all the different groups I have been involved with over the years. I think you will find that sentiment echoed by many, especially those of us who have become actively involved.

Get involved in ACDA!

It wasn't too many years ago that I would go to ACDA functions like Summer Institute or to regional/national conventions and look in admiration from afar at all local leaders like Twyla Brunson, Karen Fulmer, Leslie Guelker-Cone, Linda Hamilton, Judy Herrington, Howard Meharg, et. al., never imagining that I might get acquainted with any of them on a personal level.

All these people were too important, poised, confident and professional; I was too timid, and besides, I only taught junior high in a school with a somewhat low socio-economic clientele. Several of these leaders regularly adjudicated my groups and I held (and continue to hold!) them in great esteem.

Twyla asked me to lead a reading session at SI several years ago, and I was honored, but terrified even as I accepted. My group then performed in the Seattle NW ACDA Convention, and shortly after that Linda and Leslie asked me to serve as JH/MS R & S Chair. I had no idea what that entailed, but agreed. It has been a real eye-opener to be involved with all the planning and behind the scenes work that we often take for granted when we attend events.

It surely makes one more appreciative and less of a complainer when things don't quite



Even the registration table at Summer Institute is a friendly and supportive place!

go the way they were intended, that's for sure! have discovered that all WA-ACDA and NW-ACDA people are pretty much universally terrific people, and that these leaders especially are great to get to know.

I LOVE being around choir directors who are ACDA members! Whatever level we teach and conduct, we are all continually trying to improve and we all have high standards. Interactions with each other come easily. I do not have a feeling of competition or judgment coming from these people, but rather of affirmation and

encouragement. **This is NOT a group of unapproachable snobs!!**

Serving as Registration Chair for the last two NW ACDA conventions and for the last two Summer Institutes allowed me an enviable opportunity to meet many colleagues. It has been incredibly rewarding to put their names, faces and stories together. I hope we reach out even more to new members, potential members and younger colleagues, helping them to discover the connections and professional growth possible through ACDA membership.

Join us if you haven't already. Renew your membership regularly. Volunteer to help with Summer Institute, host a workshop, or to write a guest article for "Unison." Audition your groups for conventions and your students for our honor choirs. Attend conventions and meet some great people. Let our leadership know of your interest and say, "Yes!" when you get asked to help. Get involved!

Leora Schwitters, *President, retired after 25 years in public education in 2006, most of which was at the junior high level in Kent, WA. She holds a B.M. from the Yankton College Conservatory of Music in South Dakota and a M.A.T. from the University of Washington. She now directs Rainier Youth Choirs. Active as a clinician and adjudicator, Leora serves on the board of the Tahoma Chapter of NATS and has presided over the Green River Music Region organization.*