



Why I Give

by Alan Grimes

My contact with Heartland Men's Chorus began in 2002. At some unrelated concert I attended around that time, I came across an ad for HMC's upcoming performance, "Two Flutes Playing." I cannot recall having previously heard of the Chorus, but the description was intriguing enough to make me purchase a ticket. I was impressed by the vocal talents of the group and decided to subscribe for the following season. At that point, my interest was solely as an audience member in appreciation of the performance quality. I mailed my subscription form, a check, and a couple comments regarding the concert. I was pleased to receive a personal note back from someone named "Rick."

Not long after that, an invitation arrived for a "Garden Party" the Chorus was hosting. On it was a note of "I hope to meet you in person at the Garden Party," again signed by this "Rick." The title of "Executive Director" lent some credibility, but having only attended one concert and still being fairly uncomfortable in being "out," I did not attend.

Nonetheless, the personal note carried with me to the Christmas concert for the following season. I sought out Rick and introduced myself and my then partner, now husband (oh, Canada!). Three wonderful concerts followed. Having an appreciation for arts organizations and their oft-shaky funding, I made a small additional donation to HMC. That began what has now grown to a friendship with Rick, Joe, Cliff, Todd, Bob, Mark, Paul, Mike, and etc. I have now made it to a Garden Party, some Dinners of Note, and various other events throughout the year. I eagerly anticipate each contact with the Chorus and its members. At each event I see a caring group of men who extend a sincere welcome to even the newest and most casual audience member

I support Heartland Men's Chorus because it provides me with a sense of "home." We find comfort in many types of homes throughout life - a Scout troop, a project team at work, a church. When thinking of a "gay home," however, the options become very limited. Clubs and bars are predominantly the domain wherein the identity of being "gay" can allow a sense of belonging.

HMC is different. Yes, there is some camp. Yes, there is drama—even on this side of the curtain, I can tell that. But far greater than that, it is easy to tell that this group truly lives out its vision - "Our Voices Enlighten, Inspire, Heal, and Empower." The themes of the concerts are timely, informative, and enjoyable. And they're good! These men really do know how to sing, and the artistic depth amazes me more with every concert.

I will continue to support HMC's efforts, and I hope to become even more involved in the future. I certainly can't sing, but through my support, my heart does. Every concert, someone can be heard on the way out saying "Wow," turning to a friend to comment "That was great," or engaging others about the message. Each time that happens, another person has been welcomed into the home. We need to keep adding space to make room for us all.



Alan Grimes with executive director Rick Fisher at the 2008 Garden Party.