

Group sponsors free concert

Show-Me Showboaters free concert

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Close harmonies. Unaccompanied voices. And a championship-winning quartet. Sept. 17 could be a night of musical enjoyment, especially for those who love "barbershop"-style music, said John Downs, past president of and spokesman for the group "Show-Me Showboaters." "People can distinctly hear the four different parts," Downs noted during an interview, "whereas, sometimes that's not so easily recognized when you've got other background music going on." The evening's program promises a "Barbershop" treatment to a variety of musical styles. "Even from our chorus, there will be gospeltypes barbershop, as well as some humorous," Downs said. "There will be just a good mix. Vocal Spectrum is the featured act, a quartet of 26- to 31-year-old St. Louis area men who are the 2006 International Quartet Champions. They are "from a barbershop chorus over there called the 'Ambassadors of Harmony,'" Downs explained. They'll perform for close to an hour during the second half of the show, Downs said.

"This is the first time that we've brought in somebody who's won national and international recognition," Downs said. "The audience is going to hear sounds where they'll think, 'I didn't know that could come from a quartet.'

"One of the fellows, on one of the songs they sing, he'll hold a note for, probably, four or five minutes — while the other three are singing their various ranges, and then they all come back together."

The first half of the show features the Show-Me Showboaters and the Jefferson City High School's Chorale, with some breakout quartets from the Chorale.

"One of the fellows in our chorus has worked with the high school, and helped them form some men quartets as well as some women quartets," Downs said. "This will be the first time that these young quartets have been able to sing in front of the public — singing a capella, with no background music."

He said several of the high schoolers were "very receptive" to learning the barbershop style, which features close harmonies and no instrumental help for staying in tune and on pitch.

The free concert begins at 7:30 p.m. on Sept. 17 at the Miller Performing Arts Center, 501 Madison St.

But there is a donations program, with money raised going to both the Jefferson City and Helias Catholic high school music programs through one scholarship per school.

About 20 men currently sing with the Show-Me Showboaters, but they're always looking for more singers who are at least freshmen in high school.

After this month's concert, he said, "We'll start working on our Christmas songs and getting ready for various Christmas programs.

"They just have to be able to listen well because, if they can't hear the parts, there can't be that close harmony and somebody who doesn't carry their part will knock the rest of (the group) off quite quickly," Downs said.

