

# SAINT JOHN HIGH'S CONCERT CHOIR OFF TO LINCOLN CENTER

By Jane Barry

*The Greater Saint John Community Foundation*

Saint John High Auditorium was the locale last Saturday evening for a very talented group of sixty young people who are singing as they work diligently toward the completion of a goal set over a year ago. For the Saint John High Concert Choir, this was the thank you finale in a long series of fundraising efforts. They ranged from snow shoveling, washing dogs, dress down days, flea markets and bake sales, to "Choir for Hire" performances and concerts, as the choir leaves for "the Big Apple" March 25 to perform in the 11th Annual New York Choral Festival. In this, Saint John's 225th anniversary year, they will act as our good-will ambassadors and concrete evidence that we are truly a cultural capital, as we have recently been named. They will be performing with youth from around the globe on one of the world's greatest stages, the opportunity of a lifetime.

"Saint John High has a long tradition of commitment to not only quality education but also extra-curricular activities and community service", says Marijke Blok, Principal. The Saint John High Concert Choir performs regularly at school functions and at various venues in Greater Saint John including coffee houses, musical productions, variety shows, recitals and in a Christian Choir. It is in demand, giving back to our community by also performing benefits for local causes. It is also supported by the SJHS Student Council. The choir has consistently won numerous awards at the New Brunswick Competitive Festival of Music.

The choir members experience the rewards of dedication, music education, team building and involvement in school and community events as they prepare to be the leaders of tomorrow. No fees are required. Sometimes students will join the choir when they have not previously been involved in extra-curricular activities, thus growing their self-esteem and skills and often improving overall academic achievement. Emily Gaunce is a three year veteran of the choir and "ecstatic" at the prospect of the 5 day trip. She grew up in a home where music was part of her childhood. She explains that six choirs will compete as well as a combined group of selected participants from each delegation. Emily feels the opportunity to meet young people from other countries will be the highlight.

There is no question that Trish Gallagher, a music teacher at SJHS, who volunteers as Choir Director, is the force behind their success. Regardless of a student's past experiences or socioeconomic background, she has been able to draw out the best in young people for the last ten years. SJHS challenges young people to become innovative and critical thinkers, to achieve personal standards of success and to participate in society as responsible and caring citizens explains Maureen Desmond, Vice-Principal. She has also been a key figure in helping the Choir in many ways and realizes such experiences can be life-changing.

Many donors, both individuals, charitable and corporate groups have generously contributed to the Choir's extensive six figure fundraising efforts. The Choir is grateful to their families, Brunswick Pipeline, Holy Trinity Catholic Women's League, Irving Oil Ltd., Kent's, Dennis Knibb, Kwik Kopy, Lancaster Golden Club, Mayor's Office, Men of Fundy, New Brunswick Youth Orchestra, Saint John Arts Community, Saint John Energy, Saint John High School Alumni, Saint John High School SRC, Saint John Law Society, Saint John Trade and Convention Centre, SJHS Class of '69, Robert Selby and the public for their support. The students' efforts toward the cost of the upcoming performances have also been augmented with support from the Greater Saint John Community Foundation's Saint John Country Music Week Legacy Fund. Because of the foresight of the volunteer 2006 Canadian Country Music Awards organizing committee, the Canadian Country Music Association and supporters, the 2006 Awards were an outstanding success. A surplus resulted, and the Committee entrusted The Saint John Country Music Week Legacy Fund for the benefit of Greater Saint John's young musicians to the Greater Saint John Community Foundation.

Regardless of the competitive outcome of the New York Festival, there is no doubt that SJHS Concert Choir members will return home winners in many ways.

Information: Marijke Blok, Maureen Desmond or Trish Gallagher, Saint John High School, 658-5358 [www.sjhigh.ca/index.php](http://www.sjhigh.ca/index.php)



**Photo: The Saint John High School Concert Choir is an acclaimed sixty member student choir. They will perform at Lincoln Centre's 11th Annual New York Choral Festival this month. They are shown performing in appreciation of the outstanding community support they received, at a Gala Concert last Saturday.**



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*Community Profile is a weekly column highlighting community causes and work done by non-profit organizations in the Greater Saint John area. It is contributed by Jane Barry, executive director of The Greater Saint John Community Foundation. Contact the foundation at 506-672-8880. To view other Community profiles, visit [www.saint-john-foundation.nb.ca](http://www.saint-john-foundation.nb.ca)*