

Imagine ...

Imagine ... finding a place where everyone holds music dear to their heart, where singing and dancing and playing music occur daily, where spontaneous laughter and joy ring through every hall, where hundreds of young singers converge for community music making, where the business of the day is making sure that music is the business of the day, where talk of pedagogy and music literature and conducting sparks impassioned conversations, where visiting with life-long friends and greeting new ones reignites the fire within, where—simply by being present—you are led to count your blessings that you are in the elite minority of people who are actually paid to do the very thing you love the most, where vocation and avocation blend seamlessly and flow effortlessly between business and pleasure and learning.

This is not an imaginary world. It is the world of the OAKE National Conference. It is that special, encapsulated world where, for a few magical days, the importance of high-quality music literature, highly qualified musician-teachers, and the ideal of excellent music education rule.

By all accounts, the 2008 conference in Denver, Colorado, was a wonderful success. Sincere thanks go to **Ginger Littleton** and **Angie Gregory**, National Program Cochairs as well as to the members of ROCKE and the Western Division for hosting us. Special thanks to **Jeanne Wohlgamuth**, **Jerrilyn MacDanel**, **Jane Wenner**, and the other members of the National Conference Choirs Committee. And, a big thank you to **Nancy Johnson**, **Penny Whalen**, **Leigh Ann Garner**, **Joan Dahlin**, and **Randy Dahlin** for successfully organizing the business aspects of this outstanding event.

I'd like each of you to experience the thrill of reading an e-mail message that I received from a first-time attendee:

I have just attended my first OAKE conference and loved it. I've been teaching for 15 years and have been attending [two other music associations' conferences] always hoping to find a



Georgia Newlin

conference that would meet my needs in teaching choral music and children. This was by far my favorite conference, and I really got so much from all of my sessions and concerts. More important, everyone is so kind and willing to talk. A very different feeling from the other national conferences.

*—Middle School Music Teacher,
Boys Chorus Director.*

These words of thanks make it all worthwhile.

In addition, our appreciation goes to those who have given so much of their time and effort working on behalf of OAKE. Our heartfelt

thanks to those who are retiring from the OAKE National Board: **Kathy Hickey** (Past President), **Paul Baumann** (Secretary), **Amy Carter** (Eastern Division President), **Karen Lasky** (Western Division President), **Wendy March** (Western-1 Regional Representative), and **Susan Garrett** (Southern-2 Regional Representative).

The following thought so aptly conveys the leadership qualities of our Immediate Past President, **Brent Gault**: “In the last analysis, what we *are* communicates far more eloquently than anything we say or do” (Stephen Covey). Brent is thoughtful, human, witty, tireless, welcoming, warm, timely, energetic, efficient, diplomatic, pun-full, and inspiring, and has guided OAKE from a crisis recovery period into a new era of growth—simply by living what he believes and leading by example. There are not words to express our thanks for his exemplary leadership.

Finally, the gratitude of the OAKE Board goes out to every member of the organization in appreciation and acknowledgement of your daily work. We only wish that we had better ways to give each of you the recognition and credit you so profoundly deserve.

Remember, the board members are elected to support you. I look forward to serving OAKE, and in turn, each of you, as President for the next two years—please let me know how we can be of help.



Brent Gault officially passes the OAKE gavel to Georgia Newlin at the General Assembly. Photo by Don Garrett



Past President Brent Gault, President Georgia Newlin, and President Elect Joy Nelson enjoy themselves at the conference. Photo by Lynn Makrin