

ROCKWALL HIGH SCHOOL CHOIR

2019-2020 CHOIR HANDBOOK

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MCKINNEY HIGH SCHOOL CHOIR STAFF

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Cindy Johnston** | **Parker Lessmann** | **Dr. Danny White** | **Alan Arbabi** |
| ***Director of Choirs*** | ***Associate Choir Director*** | ***Director of Fine Arts*** | ***MHS Principal*** |
| [cjohnston@mckinneyisd.net](mailto:jjmcguir@garlandisd.net) | plessmann@mckinneyisd.net | dwhite@mckinneyisd.net | aarbabi@mckinneyisd.net |

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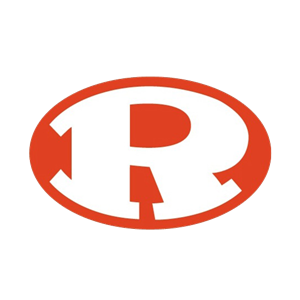
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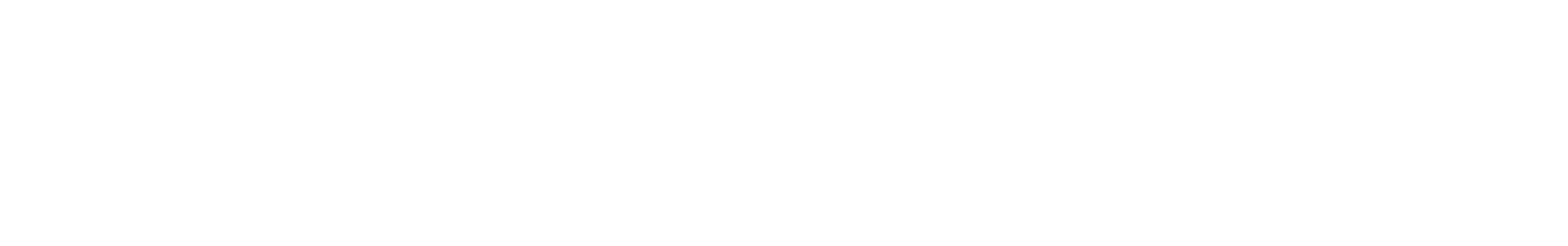
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# ROCKWALL HIGH SCHOOL CHORAL MUSIC

Since opening its doors, the Rockwall High School Choir program has been achieving the highest standard of musical excellence. Students involved in choral music have the opportunity to participate in a variety of ensembles, including   
Treble Choir, Jacket Men, Treble Select, Chorale, Sting, and Walk the Line. Through participation in any of these ensembles, students are afforded the opportunity to achieve the following goals of the program:

* Attain a healthy sound through the exploration of vocal technique and good body position
* Develop strong musicianship through the performance of “quality” choral literature, such as:
  + singing with line
  + singing with proper diction and articulation
  + singing with expression
  + singing as an ensemble
* Sing in a variety of styles, languages, and ensembles
* Learn through teamwork a sense of responsibility and commitment through a variety of performance opportunities
* Achieve a better appreciation, understanding, and respect for choral and vocal literature through performance and experience

Students are presented with the opportunity to build individual musicianship skills through small ensembles and solo performance opportunities throughout the school year.



*Meet the Directors!*

# THE CHORAL MUSIC STAFF

**Leia Browning** has a Bachelor of Music Education from the University of North Texas where she graduated Magna Cum Laude. She also attended Louisiana State University where she studied musical theatre after graduating from Ronald Reagan High School in San Antonio, TX. In high school, she was a 2-time All State Choir Member and was ranked No. 8 in her class.

Leia has been teaching high school choir for 14 years. She spent 7 years at South Garland High School and is beginning her 8th year at Rockwall High. She lives in Fate with her 9 year old son, Lucas, and 4 year old daughter, Montana.



**Parker Lessmann** began as assistant director of the Rockwall High School Choirs in 2019. Prior to RHS, he was assistant choral director at McKinney High School from 2017-2019, following his tenure at the Austin Academy for Excellence in Garland ISD for his first two years of teaching. Under his direction, his choirs have exclusively earned Sweepstakes ratings at UIL and superior ratings at Hawaiian Falls Choral Festival, including Best in Class.

Mr. Lessmann is a graduate of Texas Christian University where he earned his Bachelor of Music Education. During his time at TCU, he participated in various ensembles, including the TCU Concert Chorale and Frog Corps men's chorus. He has previously served as a vocalist in the Dallas Bach Society as well as the Verdigris Ensemble. Currently he is choral section leader and assistant youth choir director at St. Andrew United Methodist Church of Plano, and is a member of the Texas Choral Directors Association and Texas Music Educators Association.  
CHORAL ENSEMBLES AT ROCKWALL HIGH SCHOOL

*Excellence is the Standard…*

*Success is the Result*!

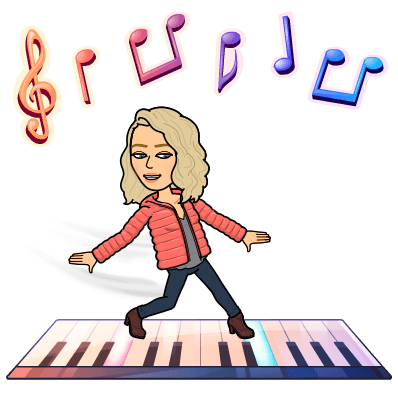
There is a choral ensemble for every student at RHS regardless of their experience or age. Directors will assess student ability and ensemble balance throughout the year. Students may be re-auditioned at the directors’ discretion before the Winter break for class changes beginning in the Spring semester.

**Jacket Men -** Semi-auditioned group for all men, grades 9-12. This choir performs at all choir concerts throughout the year and potentially participates in UIL adjudicated activities. Optional opportunities include All-Region Choir auditions, the department musical, and TMEA’s Region 25 Vocal Solo & Ensemble Contest. Emphasis is placed on the basics of music theory and literacy, with a special emphasis on the basic knowledge of solfege and sight reading.



**Treble Chorus** – Semi-auditioned group for all women, grades 9-12. This choir performs at all choir concerts throughout the year and potentially participates in UIL adjudicated activities. Optional opportunities include All-Region Choir auditions, the department musical, and TMEA’s Region 25 Vocal Solo & Ensemble Contest. Emphasis is placed on the basics of music theory and literacy, with a special emphasis on the basic knowledge of solfege and sight reading.

**Treble Select** – This auditioned choir is the advanced training women’s choir at Rockwall High School, composed of approximately 50 women. Membership is open to students in grades 9-12. Focus is placed on vocal development, advanced sight-reading skills, and ensemble preparation at a high level, as well as strong work ethic in both choir and academic areas. Participation in All-Region Choir Auditions, the department musical, and TMEA’s Region 25 Vocal Solo & Ensemble Contest is highly encouraged.

**RHS Chorale** – This is the varsity choral ensemble at Rockwall High School. Membership is open to all students in grades 9-12 through an audition in the spring of the previous year, or through approval of the Director of Choirs. Membership is limited. Music study includes exploration and performance of four-part music and advanced repertoire in all styles and time periods, along with a continued emphasis on sight-reading, solfege, and rhythm skills.

This ensemble participates in UIL music contest each spring. Participation in All-Region Choir Auditions, the department musical, and TMEA’s Region 25 Vocal Solo & Ensemble Contest is highly encouraged. The choir also participates in extra off-campus events, such as the singing of the National Anthem at the Rockwall ISD Stadium or other additional performances.

**Sting & Walk the Line** – These advanced-level contemporary acapella ensembles are auditioned groups for students grades 9-12 who have strong choir backgrounds and have demonstrated understanding of advanced choral music skills, as well as exceptional work ethic in both choir and academic areas. Musical style will focus on contemporary a cappella literature. Choral experience, audition, and director approval is required. Concurrent membership in RHS Chorale is required; director discretion may apply. Commitment to multiple extracurricular and off-campus performances is required. As the face of RHS Choir, members are expected to rigorously adhere to the RISD Student Co-Curricular/Extra-Curricular Guidelines.

ATTENDANCE

Extra rehearsals and concerts are an extension of the classroom, and students will be graded accordingly. These required choir activities are the “assessment” of the choral program and the circumstances of the “test” cannot be duplicated at another date or time. The dates for all concerts are presented to each student/family at the beginning of the year. If a student chooses not to participate in a required choir activity, even if that activity occurs before or after school or on the weekend, they will receive a grade of “0” which will dramatically affect a student’s grade for the grading period. All choir activities are a team effort; therefore, attendance is required, regardless of whether or not the student thinks attendance is needed.

Unexcused absences are determined by the choir directors, and may include:

* Lack of a ride (ask a friend ***in advance*** and/or inform your choir directors who can help you make arrangements)
* Non-school related activities (club sports, dance or music recitals, parties, birthdays, etc.)
* Job
* Trip or planned family activity
* Other circumstances not listed as determined by the choir directors

Failure to participate in required choir activities will negatively affect a student’s grade, possibly causing the student to fail choir and will also affect a student’s future placement and participation in ensembles at Rockwall High School. The student will need to contact the directors to arrange for a make-up assignment.

STUDENTS WITH JOBS

If a student has a job, please keep the following in mind:

* Having to work is NOT considered an excused absence from any required, graded activity. Missing a required, graded choir activity for work will result in a “0”.
* Students are expected to notify employers well in advance of all required choir activities. Students may print a copy of the 2019-2020 RHS Choir Calendar or may request a letter from their choir director to give to their employer regarding choir activities that may interfere with work.

COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS

Every effort is made to keep families up-to-date in every aspect of the choral program. Several means of communication will be used throughout the year.

CHARMS | http://www.charmsoffice.com/

Charms is an online information management system that RISD schools use to better serve their teachers and students. If you are involved in our program then you should become very familiar with this website! If you are new to RHS Choir please log on right now and enter your information. **If you are a returning member, even if you *know* your info is accurate, please check to see that all your information is correct**. All information stored on Charms is private and secure. Besides contact information, t-shirt sizes, etc - Charms is also where you can keep track of your fees, payments, forms and assigned materials.

To access charms, visit **charmsoffice.com** from any internet enabled device. Make sure you are entering your login information in the "Parent/Student" area. At the prompt enter "**rockwallchoir**", the **password** is your student ID number.

*Charms no longer allows ID numbers for passwords and will prompt you to change your password after your first login.*

*If you forgot your password, you are able to ask for a password reset directly from the login page; however, please email us if you have trouble.*

*Ensure your spam filter allows CharmsEmailSender@charmsmusic.com though to your inbox.*

Remind & the Remind App

Remind is a way for you to stay on top of news and events for RHS Choir. You can either download the Remind App, or to receive messages via text, text your period's handle to **81010**.

**2nd Period – Select Women – @select2nd**

**3rd Period – Chorale – @chorale3rd**

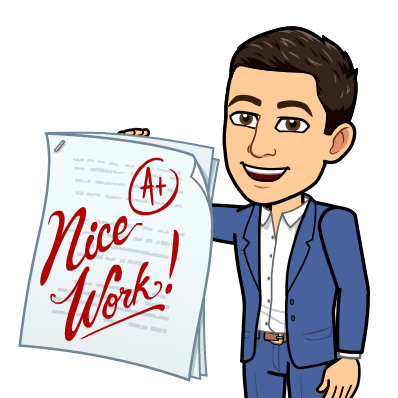
**4th Period – Jacket Men – @men4th**

**5th Period – Treble Choir - @treble5th**

**IB Music - @IBmusic3rd**

RHS CHOIR WEBPAGE | www.jacketchoir.com

The RHS Choir web page is your one-stop shop for everything Rockwall High School Choir! Announcements, pictures, class rosters, links, the choir calendar, forms, All-State resources, and more are available here. You may use this site to get to CHARMS, as well as purchasing tickets to RHS Choir events (see more information on page 10).



GRADES

Grades are determined by an average of rehearsal technique, written and singing assessments, and performance participation assessment. RISD grading policies are:

**FORMATIVE (30%)**: Participation, Homework, Bell Ringers, Music Checks

**SUMMATIVE (70%)**: Concerts, Extra Rehearsals, Tests, Quizzes, Reports

**TERM FINAL:** To be announced each term. The final exam may be written (simple theory, music history, fundamentals of singing, etc.) or performance based (sight reading, excerpt from a prepared selection).

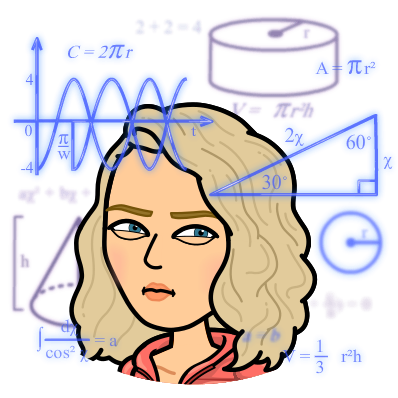
Each student is expected to track his/her choir grades through the online grade book. Students or parents concerned about their grades in a choir class should make an appointment to meet with a director to discuss their options.

RISD UNEXCUSED ABSENCE POLICY

A student involved in an extracurricular activity must notify his or her teachers ahead of time about any absences. A student will be permitted to make up tests and to turn in projects due in any class missed because of absence. Teachers may assign a late penalty to any long-term project in accordance with time lines approved by the principal and previously communicated to students.

RHS CHOIR UNEXCUSED ABSENCE POLICY

Students who do not attend a concert (test grade) will be given a zero until further explanation has been provided. If the director approves a student absence from a performance in advance, an alternate assignment will be designated. This may come in the form of a special performance for the student’s choir class, a recital performance, and/or a significant written assignment. The student will be instructed regarding when the assignment is due and the resulting grade will be registered in place of the missed performance.

**ELIGIBILITY**

Choir activities are governed by the policies of the RISD Board of Trustees, Texas Education Agency, University Interscholastic League, Texas Music Educators, and Rockwall High School. Texas Education Agency’s “no-pass/no play” rules govern all “extra-curricular” activities such as TMEA All-Region auditions/concerts, certain choir trips and selected “admission” events, such as the Department Musical. Students must earn 70 or above in all classes (all AP classes, Pre-AP classes, and dual-credit classes are exempt from this rule) to maintain eligibility status. Other details concerning eligibility will be communicated regularly in class.

UIL Concert & Sightreading is NO LONGER affected by the Texas Education Agency’s “no-pass/no play” rule.

HELP US STOCK UP ON SUPPLIES

We go through three boxes of facial tissue every two weeks in the choir room!

Please help us build up our stock by bringing a box to share!

STUDENT EXPECTAIONS

Your choral ensemble’s performance is directly related to your rehearsal. Participation is a factor in determining the quality of the finished product. Students must always work to focus with mind and body. The following are expectations designed to assist us all as we strive for excellence.

* **BE ON TIME AND BE PREPARED!** All students are expected to be in the choir room, prepared for class on the risers with binder and pencil, prior to the bell. Trips to the restroom, water fountain, and athletic lockers are to be taken care of prior to the beginning of rehearsal.
* Cell phone use is at the discretion of the directors in the choir room during rehearsals, per the RISD Cell Phone Policy.
* **ABSOLUTELY NO FOOD, GUM, OR DRINKS ARE ALLOWED IN THE CHOIR ROOM.** Failure to observe this expectation will result in choir service/classroom detention after school – Water bottles with a lid or cap are the ***only*** exceptions. Repeat offenders will be given a referral in Skyward.
* All students are expected to demonstrate behavior that is appropriate to the rehearsal process.
* **THE CHOIR DIRECTOR’S OFFICE IS OFF LIMITS TO STUDENTS.** This also goes for all storage rooms and the choral library unless given express permission by the director.
* Music is to be treated with great care. Damaged or lost music will be charged to the student. Grades will be held until the fee is paid in full to the choir.
* The piano in the choir room, as well as choir room stereo and all computers, are not for student use.

PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS

Choral students will also be graded on their performance behavior. The following expectations are required for all performances:

* Be seated or standing in place for the concert at the stated time.
* Wear the correct uniform that is required for the performance.
* Promptly check-out and return uniforms/uniform parts within the required time periods.
* Watch the director at all times.
* **DO NOT TALK ON STAGE.**
* **DO NOT DRAW ATTENTION TO YOURSELF THROUGH POOR BEHAVIOR.**
* No gum or cell phones.
* Move between the stage and seating areas in quiet, single file lines based on riser position and row. **MOVE WITH PURPOSE.**
* Always act in a professional manner. If you must question something you are about to do, then do not do it.

DIRECTOR EXPECTATIONS

The Choir Directors at Rockwall High School will commit to the following:

* Announce calendar dates for choir activities in advance.
* Provide an environment that allows students to enhance music skills in sight reading, performance, and appreciation of choral music through scholarly study.
* Make arrangements and plan substantive rehearsal and performance experiences.
* Arrange fundraising opportunities to assist students with choir financial obligations.
* Make every effort to build qualities of self-discipline, appreciation, confidence, and responsibility in each student.
* Approach every class period and rehearsal with a positive and nurturing attitude.

*“… no one should ever think that dance and music and theatre are a luxury … because for some many of our students, they are truly necessities. They’re the reason these kids show up [to school]..”*

*-- First Lady Michelle Obama (on the value of arts programs)*

UNIFORMS

All students are responsible for the proper care of their own uniforms.

WOMEN

A black dress and uniform bag **will be provided by the RHS Choral Program.** The total cost of this dress is $80.00. This amount will be charged to the student at the end of the year if the dress has been destroyed or lost. **Do not make any permanent alterations to your dress.** Students will be charged for any permanent alterations.

Female students are responsible for the following:

* Black close-toed dress shoes
* Dresses are fitted and hemmed with this shoe height.
  + Nice black flats are also acceptable
* Slip



MEN

A black tuxedo (jacket, pants, bowtie, cumberbund) **will be provided by the RHS Choral Program.** The total cost of the formal wear is $80.00. This amount will be charged to the student at the end of the year if the tuxedo has been destroyed or lost. **Do not make any permanent alterations to your tuxedo.** Students will be charged for any permanent alterations.

Male students are responsible for the following:

* Black dress shoes (No athletic shoes or boots will be accepted)
* Black dress socks (No ankle socks)
* Formally groomed (hair out of face, no facial hair)
* If you wish to purchase your own tux shirt (recommended), they are $20 at Al’s Formal Wear. They are machine washable where the rest of the tux is Dry Clean Only.

UNIFORM CARE

**Do not make any permanent alterations to your uniform.** The following are suggestions to care for dresses and tuxedos:

**DRY CLEANING YOUR UNIFORM**

* ALL STUDENTS will have their uniform dry cleaned and returned in their hanging bag with dry cleaning ticket attached at the end of the year. If you do not wish to dry clean your uniform, please send $20 cash or check to RHS Choir Boosters.

**DRESSES**

* Always hang your dress when you are not wearing it.
* Wear the shoes that you wore during your dress fitting, otherwise dress may not look right on stage.
* **DO NOT MAKE ANY ALTERATIONS!** All alterations will be made through the uniform committee chair.

**TUXEDOS**

* All tuxedos are expected to be hung properly at home when the student is not wearing it.
* **DO NOT WASH YOUR TUXEDO JACKET OR PANTS IN THE WASHING MACHINE!** Your tuxedo is to be dry cleaned only. Only your white shirt is machine washable.
* **DO NOT MAKE ANY ALTERATIONS!** All alterations will be made through our uniform committee chair.

COLOGNE AND PERFUME

All students should be “scent neutral.” That means that no cologne or perfume will be allowed during any performance. However, deodorant should be worn for all rehearsals and concerts, and students should practice proper hygiene.

CHOIR T-SHIRT

All choir students will receive a choir t-shirt as part of their choir fee. Students will be required to wear this t-shirt for the Fall Concert, casual events, and on concert days at school. Shirts must be kept clean and in good condition.

CHOIR PARTICIPATION OBLIGATIONS

This obligation will cover the cost of all uniform alterations, a choir t-shirt, buses for miscellaneous trips, music binder for each student in the choral program, All-Region Choir and All-State audition fees, Solo & Ensemble fees, as well as many other expenses that arise throughout the school year.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Class Period** | **Choir** | **Amount** |
| 2nd Period | Treble Select | $20 |
| 3rd Period | Chorale | $60 |
| 4th Period | Treble Choir | $20 |
| 5th Period | Jacket Men | $20 |
| 6th Period | Walk the Line | $120\* |
| 7th Period | Sting | $120\* |

\*Includes Chorale Obligation

FINANCIAL POLICY

No student will be denied participation in the RHS Choral Program due to the inability to pay. Please speak with Ms. Browning or Mr. Lessmann so that arrangements can be made to keep all students active in the Rockwall High School choral program, as well as eligible to participate in other RHS activities. Families have the option of post-dating checks in order to pay their choir fees in the fall.

FUNDRAISING



While RISD provides financial support for the choral program, RHS Choir students will have the opportunity of participating in fundraisers during the year to help defray the cost of travel, social events, and other designated expenses beyond the organizational fee.

Fundraising guidelines:

* Profits from fundraising are not refundable and may not be distributed to students in the form of cash.
* Profits made from individualized fundraisers (e.g. Butterbraid, Cookie Dough) will be deposited into the students’ Charms account to be used to pay for personal choir obligations.
* Profits made from program-wide fundraisers (e.g. spirit nights, grocery store charity programs, AmazonSmile) will be deposited into the general choir fund.

DELINQUENT ACCOUNTS

Students are responsible for turning in all money due to the RHS Choirs for fees, fundraising, choir trips, etc. by the required date. Many times, there is a deadline imposed on the choral program for these funds. Students who are delinquent in their payments may receive the following consequences:

* Students and their families will receive statement reminders.
* Students will not receive their choir t-shirt.
* Students may not be allowed to attend any choir trip until their account is settled.
* Student accounts that have not been taken care of may keep a student from being able to obtain a parking permit, dance tickets, walk at graduation, etc. These students will be referred to the Assistant Principal’s Office to be addressed similarly to book fines.

DEPOSITING MONEY

Every family has the option of paying cash, check, money order, or in some cases credit card for any expenses that are due to the Rockwall High School Choir Program. **All checks should be made payable to “RHS Choir Booster Club”.** Please include your child’s full name on the memo line of each check.

All payments should be placed in a sealed envelope with the student’s name, date, class period, and purpose (i.e. Choir Fees, Trip Payment, Fundraising, etc.) on it, and then placed in the drop box located inside the choir room. These envelopes are available in the choir room near the drop box. **Do not give the money to your director and do not place loose money in the safe without your name or the purpose on an envelope.**

ROCKWALL HIGH SCHOOL CHOIR BOOSTERS

It is the intent of this organization to provide support for the choirs at Rockwall High School by serving in the following roles:

* Provide chaperones for choral events throughout the year
* Assist the choral directors in the organization and implementation of fundraisers
* Provide food and supplies for RHS choir events
* Raise and distribute scholarship money to assist students in further music study
* Overall, to instill and maintain an enthusiastic interest in the various needs of the choirs at Rockwall High School

BOOSTER CLUB MEMBERSHIP HAS PRIVILEGES!

The Booster Club is an excellent way to be involved with your student’s choice to be a member of the choir. Meetings take place every other month where we will discuss everything from calendar dates to fundraisers. If your student is involved in *Sting* or *Walk the Line*, you are strongly encouraged to be a member and get involved. Parental involvement is an invaluable resource!

Family Fee per Year - $20

This fee goes directly to support the choir program. We are able to purchase music, acquire merchandise for sale, pay accompanists and clinicians, and many other necessities that the school budget does not allow for. In order for the choir program to be successful and grow, we need these resources. Also, my wish for the very near future is to begin a scholarship process for financial aid of fees, voice lessons, and college scholarships. Only Booster Club families will be eligible to receive these.

PURCHASING/RESERVING TICKETS FOR CONCERTS

The RHS choir program and booster club utilizes the Ludus Online Ticketing System. Families will have the opportunity to log on, make their seat and/or ticket selection and pay using their credit or debit card (service fee will apply).

Most concerts will be free to the public with general seating, and will ***not*** use tickets. Concerts that ***will*** have ticket purchasing include:

* Campus Musical Jan 23, 24, 25
* *Sting* Stardust Diner April 18
* *Walk the Line* Spring Show May 1, 2

Three ways to access this online ticketing service:

1. Log on to [jacketchoir.ludus.com](http://jacketchoir.ludus.com)
2. Log on to our Charms page at www.charmsoffice.com and use the school code: **rockwallchoir** then look for the Ludus icon (you do not need to enter your student ID to access via Charms)
3. Watch for e-mails from your directors with links to the ticketing system. Invite others by forwarding this link on and reserve tickets!

PRIVATE VOICE INSTRUCTION

If your student is interested in taking private lessons, the directors will refer him or her to a fantastic teacher. Rockwall High School will offer in-house lessons for $19 per half hour. Lessons are pre-paid at the beginning of each month directly to the teacher. All teachers are background checked and fingerprinted through the district and are highly qualified to teach high school students. This is the best way for your student to go above and beyond the expectations of the choir program. If your student wishes to pursue music as a career, make the All Region or All State Choir, participate in Solo and Ensemble, or audition for shows, colleges, or scholarship opportunities, private lessons are STRONGLY encouraged. Please email Mrs. Browning to set up lessons. Space is limited.

****RHS Jacket Choir

****RHS Walk the Line

****RHS Sting

RHSJacketChoir

RHSWalkTheLine

RHSSting

RHSJacketChoir

RHSWalkTheLine

RHSSting

The Real RHS Choir Boosters

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Leia Browning** | **Parker Lessmann** | **Chris Kosterman** | **Kevin Samples** |
| ***Director of Choirs*** | ***Associate Director of Choirs*** | ***Director of Fine Arts*** | ***Rockwall HS Principal*** |
| *leia.browning@rockwallisd.org* | [*parker.lessmann@rockwallisd.org*](mailto:plessmann@mckinneyisd.net) | *chris.kosterman@rockwallisd.org* | *kevin.samples@rockwallisd.org* |

ROCKWALL HIGH SCHOOL CHOIR STAFF