

Hello Region 19,

I'm Irene Hershey, Region 19 Management Team Coordinator, with some exciting information that I know we've all been waiting for. I hope this finds you all healthy and happy as we are now in the throes of the holiday season. As you learned in the November 10th email from SAI to the general membership, Sweet Adelines International announced that there will be Regional Competitions in Spring 2022. They may look vastly different across the various regions, but they all will be the first step in getting back to what we love to do: Singing with our Sweet Adeline family. That is the main goal for 2022.

All Regions were given an option to choose to hold an in-person or a virtual competition. The Regional Convention Steering Committee and the Regional Management Team have been busily working over the past months to determine the best way to host a competition and convention that will be joyful, fulfilling and safe for all attendees. I want to give you an update on our plans. First, let me tell you that we have informed Sweet Adelines International that Region 19 will hold a live in-person Convention for Spring 2022.

There was a lot to consider in making that decision to host an in-person event or video contest. Currently, our region has some of the highest COVID vaccine rates and lowest positivity rates in the country, so meeting in-person would be easier for Region 19 than many other regions. Additionally, the Lancaster County Convention Center (LCCC) and Lancaster Marriott at Penn Square complex is one of only thirty-one Global Biorisk Advisory Council (GBAC) STAR accredited convention center complexes **in the world**, achieving the highest health safety standard achievable for hotels and convention centers. GBAC STAR Accreditation designates LCCC and Lancaster Marriott at Penn Square as highly prepared venues for outbreak prevention, response and recovery, with the ability to host onsite events safely. And finally, and there is no science behind this, if it's safe, we all really want to **be together** in person.

All choruses and quartets have the option to compete live or to submit a video. However, please be aware that any chorus or quartet that is not able to or chooses not to attend in person may submit a video performance but according to policy released by SAI on November 10, 2021, that chorus or quartet will NOT be eligible for International Division awards. Those videos would be considered for Open Division or for Evaluation Only. Both of these would count toward the chorus commitment to compete every 3 years.

We are all staying abreast of the developments of the pandemic, so as we get closer to April, if the positivity rate increases to an unsafe number or if Pennsylvania imposes indoor meeting limits we will re-evaluate the plan to host an in-person event. Stay tuned for updates.

Regarding health and safety, there are many things that we can not control. But, in order to ensure the health, safety and comfort level of all attendees to the best of our ability, we have decided that for 2022, attendance will be limited to only those who are fully vaccinated. This includes competitors, vendors, visitors and staff. We want everyone to attend, however. So please, if you are not vaccinated, we hope that your desire to rejoin your singing family will convince you to make that commitment.

We also plan to create a new position on the RCSC to address health and safety issues. If you have a medical background and would like to join the team in this role, please contact the Chair of the Regional Convention (CRC) Barbara Kelly (barbarajkelly9@gmail.com).

Remember, the focus of the 2022 convention is getting back to what we love. Singing and being together. We all recognize that groups have not been rehearsing regularly for nearly two years. Don't let that stop you from attending. Even if you decide not to compete, we hope you will join us for the community of being together. We are hoping to offer a master class Thursday night led by one or more of our judges. We are also hoping to offer coaching sessions by our regional faculty. There will be an outdoor mass sing for the people of Lancaster and of course, our host chapter, Vocal Harmonix is eager to welcome us to their hometown. They have had 2 years to plan this convention and are itching to share with us all.

There will be plenty of details in the Convention handbook that will be coming out in early January. These include housing requirements, mask policy, food options and more.

Your Regional Management Team and Regional Convention Steering Committee continue to look at having a strong future and can't wait to see you all in April. It will be a wonderful time when we can all say, "Wow, isn't it great to hear those wonderful harmonies?" If you have any questions that are not answered in the Frequently Asked Questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to someone on either team. I wish you all fun and joy as you work together to create the four-part harmony sounds that we love. See you soon!