

Patricia Black named Ak-Sar-Ben Coronation Ball princess

The Ak-Sar-Ben Coronation Ball Committee announced the names of the Princesses of the Royal Court for the 2007 Coronation Ball titled *Romancing the Years* scheduled for Saturday, October 13, at the Qwest Center Omaha.

A tradition of the Heartland since 1895, the mission of the Coronation Ball is to promote, recognize and celebrate voluntarism, philanthropy and civic pride. All proceeds raised benefit the Knights of Ak-Sar-Ben scholarship fund.

A princess is a young woman between the ages of 21 and 24 whose family has actively contrib-

uted to the Omaha community.

Among the princesses of Ak-Sar-Ben for 2007 is Patricia Bitters Black from Elkhorn, daughter of Drs. Steven and Joyce Black. Patricia is attending the University of Nebraska Lincoln with a pre-nursing major. She is employed at Saint Elizabeth's Hospital and the University of Nebraska Housing.

She is involved in Eating Disorder Education and Prevention at UNL, Gamma Phi Beta and Greeks Promoting Positive Attitudes. Her special interest is scuba diving.

Her father is a plastic surgeon at the Nebraska Medical Center. He

was chief of medical staff from 1996 to 2002 at Clarkson and Nebraska Medical Center. He was president and an elder from 1996 to 2006 for Lord of Life Lutheran Church.

Her mother is an associate professor at UNMC College of Nursing. She is president of UNMC College of Nursing Alumni, president of National Pressure Ulcer Advisory Panel and former president of the Elkhorn School Foundation.

Patricia's grandparents are the late Dr. Albert Black, who was Nebraska's first plastic surgeon, and Marge Black; and the late Joseph Graupmann and Alta Graupmann.



Patricia Black

Nebraska Choral Arts Society gears up for new season

by Mary Lou Rodgers

Growing up in Elkhorn and as a music major at UNO, Renée Peters Spicka has spent many hours doing what she loves—singing. Now she is the executive director of an organization that provides opportunities for children and adults to sing in professional quality choirs.

Spicka heads the Nebraska Choral Arts Society, which is now gearing up for its 2007-08 season by auditioning prospective members for its children, teen and adult choruses. She is just one of many people from the Elkhorn, Bennington and metro area who enjoys being part of this musical experience.

This year's concert season theme is "Music of the Americas". It will begin with a benefit concert for

Project Hope on October 9, featuring all eight choirs with about 350 singers. The Masterworks and CAST (teens) choirs will perform songs of American composers at UNO on October 20 and folk songs on March 2.

The signature concert of the year will be the Festival of Christmas Brass and Choral Music December 7-8 at First United Methodist Church in Omaha. This will be the 25th anniversary of the traditional Christmas concert, and Spicka hopes

to bring back the original artistic director, Tom Brantigan, along with Masterworks alumni, to join the current group directed by Dr. Matthew Harden of UNO. Mike Thompson, of Thompson Music in Elkhorn, part of the Omaha Brass Ensemble, has been part of the Christmas concert for several years.

Spicka, who earned a Bachelor's degree in Music in Voice Performance from UNO in 2003, is the music coordinator for Mary Our Queen Church in

Omaha and is a cantor for St. John's in Valley. She joined the Masterworks choir six years ago and then urged her father, Don Peters, to join, too. Peters, a past president of the choir, said it is a very rewarding experience working with such talented singers.

"The material is challenging and offers a refreshing change from the daily routine," Peters said. "Dr. Harden provides fantastic leadership for our group."

The Masterworks choir of 40-45 members ranges in age from 18 to 80. Besides their four season concerts, they take a short tour and sing at Royals' games and other events. The children's choirs range in age



Members of one of the NCAS children's choirs perform at their spring 2007 "Crossing Time" concert. Auditions for several children's choruses will be on August 23. Photo: Ben DeVries

from second grade through high school.

Other concerts in the 2007-08 season will be the Children's Chorus on March 29, Masterworks and Bel Canto on April 26, and the Children and CAST on May 17.

To schedule an audition, call 342-6753 or visit www.choirmusic.org for more information.



Renée Spicka, who grew up in Elkhorn, is the NCAS executive director.



The NCAS Masterworks adult chorus performs during the fall 2006 "Eastern Escapes" season concert. The chorus is now auditioning by appointment until August 20 for the 2007-08 season. Photo: Kurt Johnson

Edward Jones ranks highest in investor satisfaction 3 years in a row

For the third year in a row, the financial services firm, Edward Jones, ranks highest in investor satisfaction with full service brokerage firms. The rankings came from J.D. Power and Associates 2007 Full Service Investor Satisfaction Study (SM) according to Steve Kucirek, a financial advisor in Elkhorn, and Matt Geiseman in Bennington.

The study measures overall investor satisfaction with full service investment firms based on six factors (in order of importance): financial advisor/broker, account setup/account offerings, investment performance, commissions and fees, account statements, and convenience.

The J.D. Power and Associates study found that Edward Jones performed particularly well in financial advisor/broker and investment performance.

"To be ranked highest in investor satisfaction is a great honor and ranking highest three years in a row is quite an accomplishment," said Kucirek. "We are especially proud

of this achievement because it is the result of how our clients view Edward Jones. Our clients are the true judges of our service."

The study finds that, despite the increased availability of tools for self-directed investors, the percentage of investment decisions made under the guidance of a financial advisor has increased to 59 percent in 2007 - up from 53 percent in 2006.

"We believe in building relationships and in treating our clients as we would like to be treated," Geiseman said. "It shapes the way we do business - face-to-face from convenient locations in the communities where our clients live and work."

The study also finds that 39 percent of affluent investors are "highly satisfied and invest more than 90 percent of their assets with their primary investment firm."

Edward Jones ranked highest in investor satisfaction by J.D. Power and Associates in 2005 and 2006, and highest in 2002 in a tie, when the study began.

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