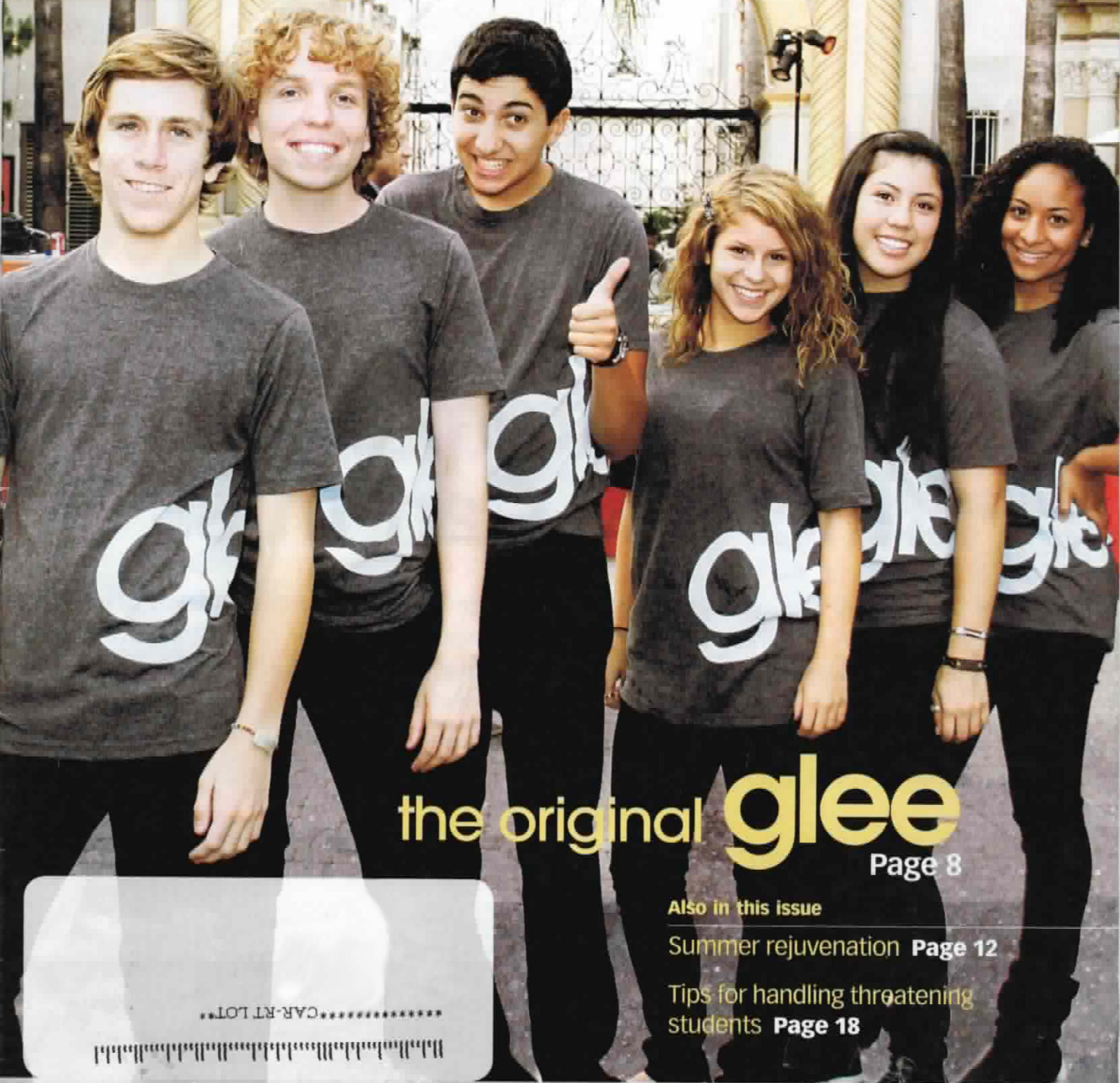


Paramount Pictures
California

EDUCATOR

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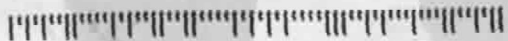
the original **glee**
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The original

What makes a school's choir work

They may not be menaced by an evil gym teacher or get splashed in the face with slushies regularly, but students belonging to John Burroughs High School's glee club and their choral teacher, Brendan Jennings, are the real-life inspiration behind "Glee," the hit television show on Fox.

The show's pilot was filmed in the school's band room, and the set was modeled on it. Last year, members of Powerhouse, one of three competing glee choirs at the school, performed with the "Glee" cast on "The Oprah Winfrey Show," where they were introduced

as the "glee club behind the show." Powerhouse also performed with "Glee" stars at the season 2 premiere cast party at Paramount Studios and were visited in their choir class by cast members Cory Monteith (Finn Hudson), Matthew Morrison (Will Schuester) and Amber Riley (Mercedes Jones), who wanted their perspective on what it's like to be in glee club.

"It was in the middle of a normal day, and they came walking in the door, and we all turned around and did a double take and said OMG," reports student Justin Fallon. "You don't normally see TV stars walk into

a classroom. It was a huge surprise."

Powerhouse may have an affiliation with the show, but members enjoy plenty of success on their own, under the direction of Jennings, a member of the Burbank Teachers Association. Among the group's accomplishments are winning the 2008 Chicago Show Choir Championship and then winning the 2009 National Show Choir Championship in New York. In February, Powerhouse and Jennings traveled to Hong Kong to perform for the internationally televised Cathay Chinese New Year Night Parade, and in October, Powerhouse appeared

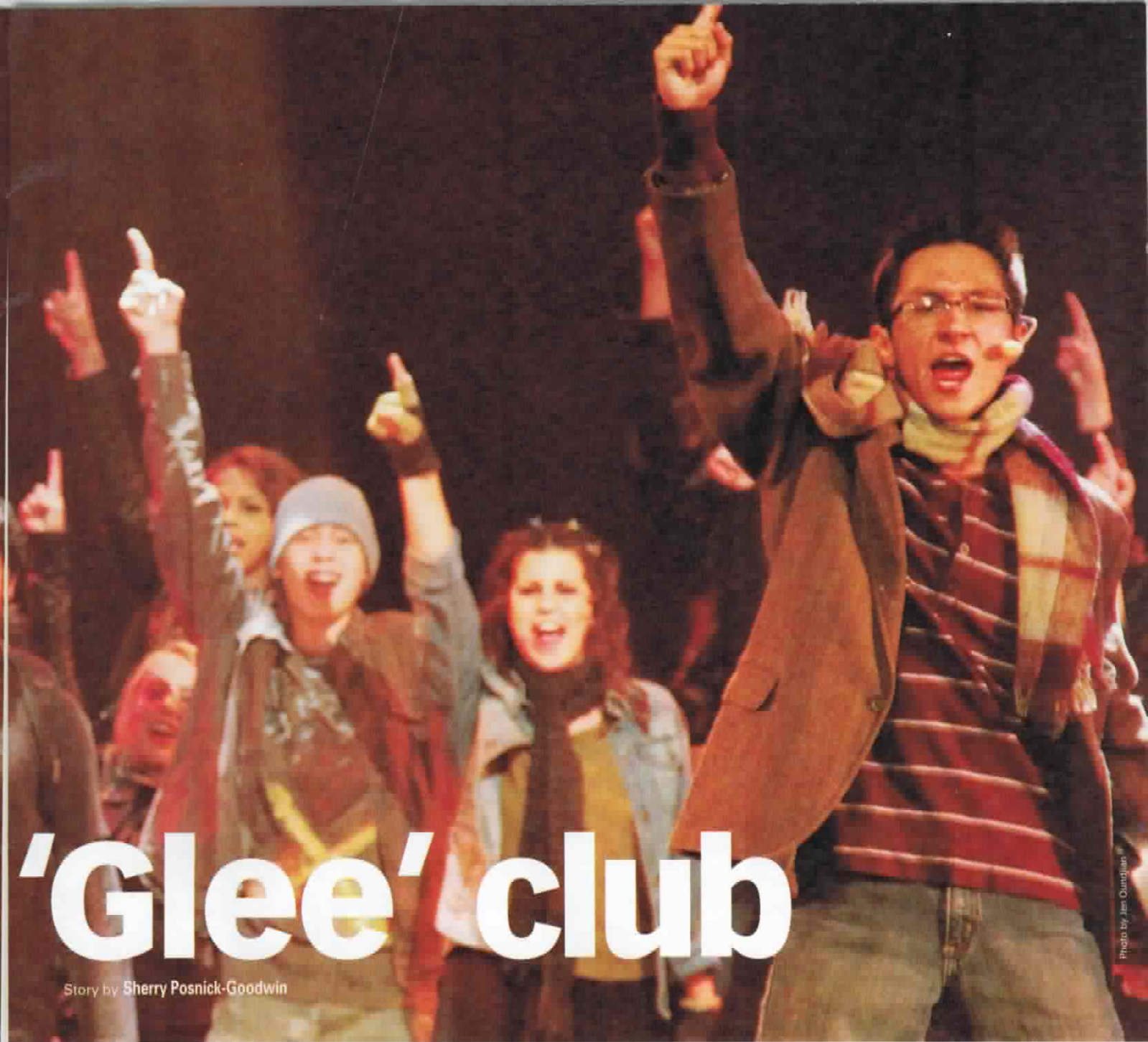


Photo by Jim Ounfjian

'Glee' club

Story by Sherry Posnick-Goodwin

on "Dancing With the Stars." Powerhouse members performed in concert with Foreigner at the Gibson Amphitheatre in 2010, and the group was also featured at the gala opening of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art's Resnick Pavilion, opposite Christina Aguilera and The Canadian Tenors.

They may be stars, but a visit to the classroom of these the real-life "Gleeks" proves them to be regular students with a regular and extremely dedicated teacher.

"Noooo, it's not like you see on TV," says Brandon Galvez. "They make everything look

effortless in the show. The kids on 'Glee' instantly know all the music and choreography. We can spend weeks or months practicing."

"We don't spontaneously break out into song," chimes in Sydney Baldwin. "And the TV show's glee club is much smaller. We have 54 kids in Powerhouse."

Students observe that teens on the show are portrayed as outcasts, but being in a glee club is "cool" at Burroughs High School. The most accurate part of the show, say students, is that glee club is a place where *everyone* is welcome, regardless of race or sexual orientation.

"We are successful because Mr. Jennings picks out really, really good music," adds David Kalpakian. "He knows how to connect us to the song and the song with us. And he picks songs that always go really well with the set theme."

www

Watch the original glee club perform by going to youtube.com and searching for "Burroughs Powerhouse."

We stopped by for a chat with BRENDAN JENNINGS, shown here conducting one of the school's choirs. Here's what he had to say about working with these talented students.



Photo by Scott Buchanan

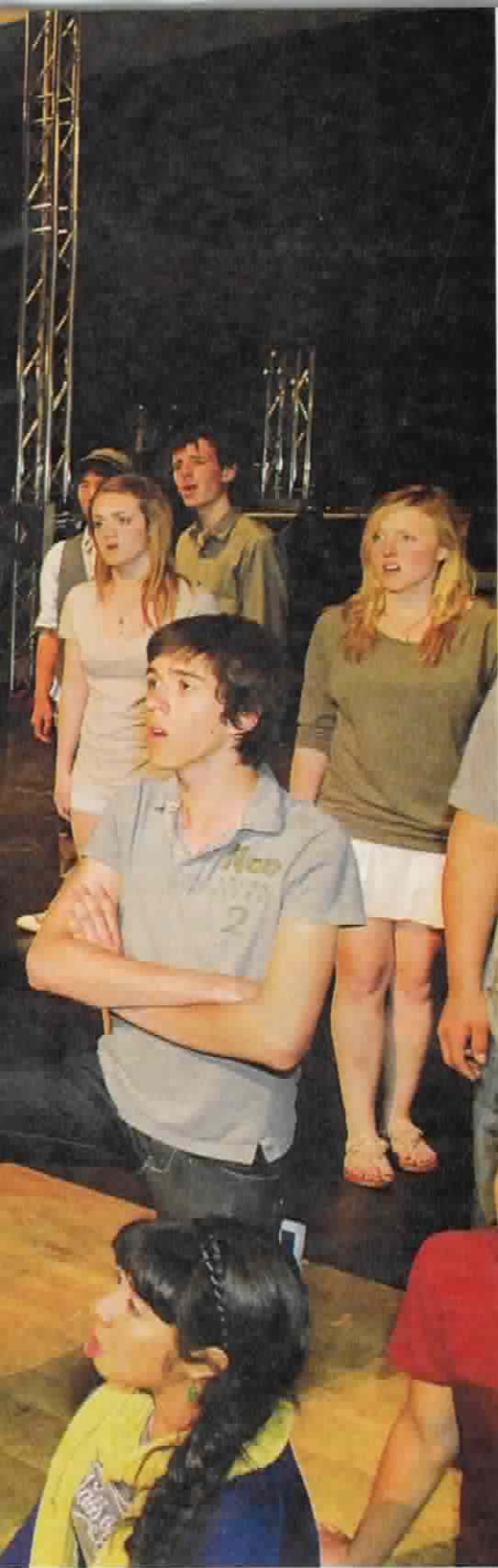
Q&A

EDUCATOR: What is the most rewarding aspect of your job?

BRENDAN JENNINGS: Working with high school students who challenge and amaze me every day. They are so willing to give their effort and energy, especially when you get them excited about a project or goal.

What is the biggest challenge?

The challenges of my job shift daily. Educational bureaucracy, keeping the kids focused on success across their academics, working with a booster club, and plain old lesson planning are among the biggest.



What about the fundraising? Is it difficult to support this program financially?

The fundraising efforts to run my program are extensive. Parents contribute directly; students participate in individual fundraisers. We hold special events — pancake breakfast, rummage sale, and restaurant nights — and we do four big shows per year.

It is my philosophy that since we are a performing organization, we should raise money by having great shows.

Do your kids get picked on like in the show, or is it now cool to be in glee club?

I don't think my students get picked on much at all. I have heard stories about a comment here or there made in a hallway, but the fans far outweigh the foes. It's definitely a respected part of our school.

Slushies?

We have a 7-Eleven about a block away from our school and still no slushie attacks! I don't think there are many students at our school who want to get in that kind of trouble.

Has the TV show had a big impact on the popularity of glee clubs in general — and your glee clubs?

I think the TV show has had a tremendous impact on the popularity of glee clubs and show choirs. My program was already doing very well before "Glee," but the show has certainly opened a lot of doors for us.

In the show, the club offers a home for everyone, ranging from cheerleaders and football players to nerds and students who are gay. Is this a realistic portrayal?

This is extremely realistic. My students come in all shapes, sizes, colors and orientations. This is the most realistic part of the show — and the fact that music brings them all together. There are some bumps along the way, but the students absolutely learn tolerance and acceptance. It's the moments where they don't get along, however, where they often can learn the most.

In the show there is lots of drama. Is this a mirror of real-life glee?

We're not into egos and divas. We all have to have a certain ego to go out there and perform. Handing out solos and front-row spots can always be upsetting for some. Again,

those are the times to educate students and help them deal with the feelings that are behind whatever negativity they are showing. The kids always get over it quickly and move on. It's often the parents that need talking to.

Are you like Mr. Schuester at all?

I joke with my kids that our biggest difference is that he's not as good-looking as me! In reality, I think I share his love for the kids and for music. While I can't make my students magically know whatever song starts playing (like on the show), I can prepare my students with the skills they'd need to become a professional that gets cast on that show.

Is there anyone on staff who wants glee club to go away? Not so much a Sue Sylvester, but someone who sees it as an unnecessary expense and suggests cutting it?

I haven't encountered anyone like that. The small amount that the school can provide is about 1 percent of our total budget. We raise the remaining 99 percent. Yes, that small amount our school gives us has been cut in the last few years, but by the same amount as each department in our school. I am amazed by what my fellow teachers are able to do despite the lack of funds available.

Why do we need programs like this for our students?

Students need something to be invested in and excited about. It can be music, sports, science, community service or any other activity. The important thing is that students are able to connect with each other and their school.

What do kids take away from being in glee club that will help them succeed in life?

The kids are not only learning to be great singers, but also great people. Students in my program will be pushed to reach for, and achieve, excellence. Understanding what that takes and developing a desire for it will last a lifetime and help my students go on in any field they choose. ♣