

So maybe you want to be a judge or CA? This form letter will give you some idea of the process involved. You are about to enter a wonderful part of the barbershop world.

The philosophy for selecting new applicants is to look for people who have the personal experiences and current activities that already qualify them to be judges, and then train them in using those skills in the judging program. This mandates that you are doing your own preparation, that you are aware of what judges do, and that you only need some technicalities and some polishing. Obvious qualifications are people skills, and experience in coaching both quartets and choruses. Specific categories have particular concerns--for instance, MUSIC judges are often also arrangers.

Talk with judges, coach often, spend time in the judging area, involve yourself with the judge-type activities, and when you think you are ready, begin the following process.

There are several steps, and several different people involved. Obviously, as chairman of contest activities in the Pioneer District, I am involved. The next person who has a say in all of this is the Category Specialist, who is given the responsibility of shepherding and guiding his category. Finally, there is the Society Contest and Judging Committee who recommends you to the Society President, the one who actually signs the certificate, along with the SCJC chairman. It really is a big deal!

What is the process? Well, here goes . . .

The first step is for you to request two (2) judges/CAs in the category in which you are interested to write you a letter of recommendation. They should send those letters to me at:

Al Fisk
Pioneer District VP C&J
1018 River Mist Drive
Rochester, MI 48307

Then, fill out the application form (that you can get from me or on our Pioneer web site) and return it to me, at the above address.

I will contact your references by mail, and upon receiving the replies, make up a package of materials to send to the Category Specialist with my recommendation that you be considered or not be considered as an APPLICANT to the judging program. In the unlikely event that my recommendation is negative, I will include an explanation of my reasons for such a recommendation, and a copy will be sent to you. In this case, no news is good news.

At the end of January, the Category Specialist will review the package and make his recommendation. If he approves the application, he will send your name to Kenosha (Nashville). You will have achieved APPLICANT status, and can begin receiving tests (March/April). Caki Watson cwatson@spebsqsa.org is the staff member with whom you need to communicate regarding training materials, tests and costs. If, for some reason, the CS does not accept your application, an explanation of the reasons will be given to you.

After the General Knowledge test, and Category written test(s), and after practice-scoring and taped evaluation sessions have been reviewed by the Category Specialist, you may be invited (by the end of May) to attend the next judge training class (Applicant School - August 2008) prior to Harmony College in St. Joseph, Missouri. With a passing grade from the class, you become a CANDIDATE.

As a candidate, you will be expected to practice-score a number of taped performances, and to attend contests as a practice judge. These practice scores and your evaluation evaluations (so to speak) will be sent to the Category Specialist, and shared with the certified judges of your category, the DVP, C&J of the contest district, and your own DVP, C&J. By the way, if you can become a candidate during the first year of a cycle, you have more time to practice, which is very helpful for next step.

When that time comes (every three years, the next one being 2010), the Category Specialist will invite you to attend Category School, in St. Joseph, Missouri, scheduled the week before Harmony College.

Upon satisfactorily completing the Category School, you are certified for a three-year period. All judges are invited back to the next Category School in order to certify for another three-year session.

This sounds like a lot, and it seems to take a long time. The lengthy process serves two purposes: The first is that you have lots of experience in practice judging and in evaluation before you get to the real thing. The second is that we really do depend greatly upon our judging cadre to preserve and encourage barbershop. This is not something to be taken lightly. It is a large responsibility to encourage and assist even the poorest of contestants; it may be an even greater task to motivate and help the almost-champions.

Welcome to this task. It is a demanding and rewarding responsibility. It is a privilege to serve your fellow barbershoppers in this very necessary and sometimes unappreciated role. As you progress through the various stages, please know that I am here to assist in whatever way I can. If I can answer questions, or if I can help in some way, please ask. I am ready to work with you as you move forward.