

In Harmony



Linda Hackett, Olivia Bean Photography

Over the years, the Harmony Singers have helped raise funds and awareness for organizations such as Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank, Mom's House, Habitat for Humanity, Special Olympics, the Alzheimer's Association and Angels for Animals.

If you added some senior citizens to the cast of the television show *Glee*, you'd have The Harmony Singers, says Cynthia Prat, the nonprofit group's choral director. "We like to do comedy skits sometimes, and we incorporate movement. We have a group of girls that do a tap dance every year. We do choreography. We are more of a variety show in some respects."

The Harmony Singers, including seven Mt. Lebanon members, are celebrating their 50th anniversary. With 40 members ranging in age from teens to late 70s, the group performs for charitable causes. During the holidays, they sing at retirement homes, go caroling and put on a concert. For the spring show, this year scheduled for April 23, at 7:30 and April 24 at 2:30 at Chartiers Valley Intermediate School, they sing a variety of music, including Broadway hits, pop, oldies and spiritual.

Among the members are teachers, engineers, nurses, counselors, bus drivers, bank/city executives, interior designers, housing managers, salespeople—and a number of retired Mt. Lebanon teachers.

"I like the fact that we can find harmony and joy singing songs we like, both new and old," says Judy Wendell, the group's business manager, a former MLHS English teacher. "And we can bring a smile to the faces of senior citizens when we go and visit the Baptist Homes, for example."

"Sometimes preparing for the show seems like so much work," says Norina Daubner, Milbeth Drive, a retired Mt. Lebanon High School math teacher and a member for about 30 years. "I stop and think, 'why am I doing this?' But when I do the show, I always feel as though it's been worth all of the work."

You don't have to audition to join; the only requirement is to attend practices. The group practices once a week year-round and twice a week between January and the spring concert. Every few years, they take their show to New York City. In 2008 and 2011, they performed at Carnegie Hall, where they'll return this May.

Shelley Chandhok, Woodhaven Drive, and Faye Cohen, Sunridge Drive, another former MLHS teacher, agree that Carnegie Hall was a thrill. "I have pictures of it on my wall," says Cohen, a 10-year member. "It's a memory that will live a lifetime."

In addition to making music, The Harmony Singers have fun, hosting holiday parties, picnics and other group activities. "There's a camaraderie there. People make some nice and lasting friendships," says Rick Campbell, Serpentine Drive, a 38-year-member. "We've got a number of widowers and widows in the group, and it gives them a place to make some connections and have some social time."

For further information about the spring show titled *I Have a Song to Sing: 50 Years of Harmony*, visit www.harmonysingers.org or call 412-833-6341.

—SABRINA ROMANO