

Pacific Music Guild now celebrating 10 years singing

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Christie Lynn Rust retired in 2008 after three decades of teaching everything music at Del Norte High School, from concert and jazz bands to all of the choirs.

“The whole tuna,” as Rust puts it.

There was just one problem with her departure plan. “I was going nuts being retired,” Rust said.

So, she went back to doing what she loved most - directing - and in the fall of 2009, formed the Pacific Music Guild.

The organization is celebrating the 10th anniversary with its 2019 Christmas Concert, featuring the all-adult North Coast Chorale, the Crescent City Children’s Choir, and the barbershop quartet Vested Interest.

Rust said the guild has developed into a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, open to anyone to join, with a choir tailored for any age group. The North Coast Chorale averages about 80 singers, from high school to some in their 90s.

Members are not required to audition, which encourages everyone to join, Rust said. The cost to join is \$95 per person, which helps fund the travel, music and director's stipend.

"The whole purpose was to provide a place for community members to join and play music throughout their lives, from junior high into their 80s," Rust said. "It turned out to be a lot of fun."

Meantime, Rust has gotten ambitious with the chorale's tours. They've saved up to perform in Europe, including Germany, Poland and at The Vatican in Rome. Rust said the North Coast Chorale is one of only a few authorized to sing in The Vatican, where last year they participated in a huge mass.

Back home, the Pacific Music Guild also provides a Celtic harp class and an adult jazz band, Tsunami Swing.

Rust said the side benefit of being a nonprofit is that the groups can sing a variety of music during the holidays, from popular (Christmas on Broadway medley) to sacred ("Sure on this Shining Night").

The biggest benefit the guild provides, Rust added, is a place for anyone to continue their love of singing. "Before the guild, there was no real place to sing outside high school or college once you've left those places. This allows people of all ages to sing again," she said.

Many members stay on, developing lasting friendships. Others, like Greg Goode, expand the program. Goode, who has sung with the North Coast Chorale since its beginning, branched out six years ago to form the kids' choir.

Goode taught music for 17 years in the Del Norte School District, from kindergarten to eighth grade. These days, he teaches adult education at Pelican Bay State Prison.

Directing the children's choir has allowed him to experience his first love of teaching youth. "There really is no other group like that, up to high school in our area, for vocal groups," Goode said.

The Children's Choir is for those ages 10 and up. Goode puts applicants through a "simple, little audition to see if they can sing and keep a tune."

December is the choir's busiest time of the year, he added, as they also tour the grade schools with performances.

"The best thing to me is, they're super good to each other. They're all kind and considerate. We have a family feeling. And they actually sound wonderful, tremendous. We always incorporate three-part harmony.

"It's fun being around young people again," Goode said.

It costs \$85 to join the Children's Choir, although the guild does offer scholarships. "We never turn a kid away for money. We never let that be a barrier," he said.

"I hope we can spread the word, so the community can see what these kids 10 and up can do. The public schools don't fill that void."

The Christmas Concert is a two-night affair, at 7 p.m., Dec. 3-4 at the Crescent Elk Auditorium, 994 G St. Tickets are \$10, available at the door or at Del Norte Office Supply, 240 I St. in Crescent City.