

Singing is fun for Voices of the Applegate

BY DIANA COOGLE

The Voices of the Applegate choir might take Ella Fitzgerald's declaration as their motto: "The only thing better than singing is more singing."

So the Voices ring out with song twice a year for the community, and in rehearsals for about three months before each concert (and individually, no doubt, day after day). Under the direction of Blake Weller, the Voices of the Applegate brings the joy of song to the community in everything from fifteenth-century Renaissance music to songs of modern musicals, from folk music and sea chanties to African songs, from Bach's *Magnificat* to "Bohemian Rhapsody" by Queen. They might sing in Latin, Italian, or Hebrew. At every concert they'll invite the audience to join in singing at least one song, and by then they have made singing sound like so much fun even the croakiest voice joins in, making us believe, for that moment, at least, that we are all the voices of the Applegate.

Joan Peterson helped start the choir 13 years ago, when Marvin Rosenberg told her he wished he could sing four-part harmony in the Applegate and asked if she would ask Dave Marston, revered choir master of the Siskiyou Singers, if he would lead the group if they got one started. She did, and they did, and Dave did. He directed the choir until his death in 2011.

At auditions for a new director, the committee was impressed by Blake Weller's ease of directing. "He has a way about him that makes singing a lot of fun without a lot of effort," Joan says. Kathy Escott, who has been in the choir for ten years, says that "his enthusiasm and dedication to our little group endeared me to him immediately, and his incredible musical knowledge made him the perfect teacher."



Voices of the Applegate holds concerts twice a year at Applegate River Lodge. Photo: Robert Cremins.

The goal of the group, Joan says, is just to have fun. Blake is especially good at making that happen. "He is always upbeat," Joan says. "He keeps us laughing." He even teaches the choir folk dancing to help them learn some of the rhythms.

Blake's wife, Julie, music director at North Medford High School, sometimes sings with the group or serves as its accompanist, though the choir has now hired a permanent accompanist, Joanna Lynden, on piano.

Concerts take place every spring and fall at the old Presbyterian Church in Jacksonville and at the Applegate River Lodge in Applegate. They are free to the public, but donations help augment the money received from "club dues" (\$55 per person per session) to pay Blake and Joanna and to cover the cost of sheet music. Blake and Julie often provide choir members with MP3 copies of the music so singers can learn their parts by listening.

Anyone can join Voices of the Applegate. There are no auditions, and it isn't even necessary to know how to read music. "As long as you can carry a tune, you're in," Joan says (but then she says that no one would know if you can't). The main criterion seems to be to enjoy singing.

Beate Foit is a good example of a voice of the Applegate. Singing with the group, she says, gives her an opportunity to make her voice heard without having to take center stage. She particularly likes madrigals because each part has a contra part, and "it all comes together in a beautiful way."

"What I like about Voices of the Applegate," Beate says, "is that we connect with the community and give them an opportunity to come together and have a good time. When I look at

the people in the audience, I see that we touch people with our hearts and souls."

It's true. After every concert we go home thinking that the only thing better than singing is more singing.

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••• BIZBITS •••

Welcome to BizBits, a new section that will highlight businesses new to the area, as in the first five businesses below, or holding special events, such as the new line of clothing in the last business profiled below. If you are a business owner, please let us know when you move into the area or to a different location or plan to hold a special holiday open house, for example. Email your information to gater@applegater.org.

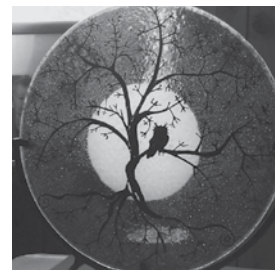
Black Apple. According to Lance Holder, proprietor of Black Apple, his business is simple: its mission is to provide a variety of choices when it comes to trimming machines and to do so with discretion. Black Apple offers many different brands of trimmers (Twister, Zoom Double Barreled, Greenbroz, and ProTrim), as well as parts and accessories, and can be found at 850 B Rogue River Highway, Grants Pass. For more information, email blackapple@budget.net.



Born Again. Lynda Hickey and Debbie Shepherd are providing residents of the Applegate a place to buy or trade (for store credit) quality second-hand clothing. Most of the items have been procured through donation and are often given back to the community, free of charge, as care packages for those in need. The store recently did a winter coat drive and received 75 coats to give away. Upcoming, Born Again will expand their store at the Sunshine Plaza in Ruch to include home furnishings and furniture for sale. The store's address is 7382 Highway 238. For more information, call 541-301-0820 or email bornagainoregon@gmail.com.

Copper Studio. Southern Oregon's newest production space is where production professionals and others can take advantage of the 30 by 30-foot studio space and its many accoutrements, including a video edit suite, dressing room, full kitchen, and ADR (Automated Dialog Replacement) booth. Paying special attention to acoustics, owner Rick Moir has made an ideal space for recording sound. Producers can bring their own gear, or rent services and equipment from Copper Studio. Conveniently located near the Medford airport, the space, which sports multiple 110V outlets, can also be utilized for parties, events, and meetings. Contact information: Copper Studio, 3559 National Drive, Suite 105, Medford; 541-773-8021 or shoot@copper.studio;

Infusion Glass: The Art of Grieving. Influenced by the Visionary Art Movement, Joele Williams is a self-described "cremation artist," who uses the ashes of your loved one to render something beautiful. Perfecting her techniques in the kiln over a period of many years, Joele, a former teacher at the Fire Arts Center in Arcata, works with ashes in her forest studio outside Grants Pass to create glass sculptures, jewelry, wind chimes, and other unique pieces called "cremation memorials." For more information, visit https://www.etsy.com/people/infusionglass?ref=hdr_user_menu or email infusionglass@gmail.com.



Siskiyou Vital Medicine. Siskiyou Vital Medicine is a close team of naturopathic physicians committed to providing quality, affordable healthcare to the community. Their clinic is insurance-free and open to membership. They currently offer low-cost, community-sponsored healthcare for \$100 or less a month. Membership includes ongoing, comprehensive healthcare with no deductibles or co-pays, unrestricted access, urgent care, technology visits, wholesale labs, and in-office procedures at cost of materials. Visit 1840 East Barnett Road, Suite B, Medford, or call 541-210-5687 during regular business hours, Monday through Friday, 9 am to 6 pm.



The Creator's Gallery and Boutique. Owned and operated by clothing designer, Anna Chauffe, at 145 North Fifth Street in Jacksonville, the boutique sells women's, men's, and children's apparel in sizes 0 to 32. Anna, one-time first runner-up for Mrs. Oregon Plus, is the first business owner in southern Oregon to specialize in plus-sized clothing. A new clothing line, "Sonshine Apparel," the creative result of commissions received from her Make a Reasonable Offer Boutique, has been a collaborative, family effort; daughter Faith, also a designer, and mom Jeanie, a seamstress, were enlisted to help create and launch the new line. For hours and information, call 541-414-6887 or email thecreatorsgallery@gmail.com.



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—NOTICE—

The Community Calendar, usually found on this page, has been temporarily relocated to our website at www.applegater.org. We hope to return the calendar to this location in the next issue.