

Written by Doris Sjolund
in 2009 for publication

In the early 1980s, a young mother approached her children's music teacher, offering to help organize a community children's chorus. That mother, Judy Cushing, prompted the music teacher, Doris Sjolund, to organize the Rogue Valley Children's Chorus in 1982. The two women sang in the Rogue Valley Chorale, which became the parent organization and gave seed money.

The first group of choristers, ages 9-13, performed on a program with the Rogue Valley Chorale in 1982. After three years, a second chorus was organized for younger singers and was first directed by Carol Davidson Sinclair. That group was called the Rogue Valley Discovery Chorus, winner of a naming contest. A parent from that group designed the current logo for the organization.

During 1987-8, the choruses were abandoned for lack of a director, when the first two moved away. The following year Cori Gibson revived the older group, which she directed for several years. Soon, the singers were again divided into the Discovery Chorus and the Children's Chorus. Singers came from Medford, Phoenix-Talent, Central Point, Eagle Point, private schools, and home schools.

Each chorus has an adult accompanist and adult assistants. A steering committee was organized to assist with treasurer's duties, concert arrangements, and other decisions. That group of parents and community members operates under the umbrella of the Rogue Valley Chorale.

In the early 2000s, another chorus, Rogue Valley Youth Ensemble, was organized, especially for boys, whose voices had changed, and other singers who had no chorus opportunity at their schools. RVE now numbers over 40 singers from middle schools, high schools, and home schools and is directed by its founder, Pamela Nordquist.

All the choruses are now part of the Rogue Valley Youth Choruses. The newest chorus, also the youngest, was organized three years ago with the help of a grant from the Carpenter Foundation. There are now four choruses for singers 8-18, and they come from more than 30 public and private schools in the valley.

Adult directors, in addition to those listed above, included Wendy McPhetres, Gerry Flock, and Sandy Roney. The directors keep working toward the mission of quality choral music education through quality choral music. The singers pay a modest tuition, approximately \$5 a week, and perform at the Rogue Valley Manor and the Craterian or a high school auditorium each season. They regularly perform student assembly programs and often are heard around the community. The older groups have also performed at contests, festivals, and for professional

organizations--Northwest Music Educators, Oregon Music Educators, American Guild of Organists.

The public spring concert, "Spring is in the Air!", will be presented on Saturday, May 2, 2009, 7:00, at the Craterian Ginger Rogers Theater. Tickets are available at the box office for \$8, \$5. Children who love to sing should note auditions for next year's choruses for elementary and middle school singers will be held on May 12, 4:00-6:00, at Orchard Hill Elementary. More information will be available at schools or by calling
