

CHAPTER HISTORY OF EUGENE TRESHOLD SINGERS IN EUGENE, OREGON

MILESTONES AND MEMORIES

Written by Sara Mitchell, with help from Bhavia Wagner and Karen Stingle

2026

Planting the Seeds

Beginning in approximately 2010, several local singers contacted Kate Munger, the founder of Threshold Choir International, about starting a chapter in Eugene, Oregon. Kate kept the singers' contact information in her database until there were enough singers to start a chapter. On February 24, 2011, Kate sent an email to eleven singers, encouraging them to contact each other to begin a choir. This original group included Cynthia Beal, Clair Van Bloem, Bhavia Wagner, Karen Stingle, Jeanne-Marie Moore, Dorothy Attneave, Tahaia Johnson, and Anne Gilbert.

Cynthia Beal became the new chapter's coordinator. Kate Munger came to the first meeting held at Cynthia's house. This initial group was named the Eugene Threshold Choir. Chapter members met at The Jazz Station in downtown Eugene for almost a year. Then the group lost momentum in the fall of 2012.

A Fresh Start, Getting Rooted and Grounded

Also in the fall of 2012, Susan Hopkins, a volunteer at Cascade Hospice, shared her vision of singing at bedside with Katherine Bragg - the Volunteer Coordinator at Cascade Hospice at that time. Katherine contacted Sara Mitchell (an old friend), and arranged for Sara to meet with Bhavia Wagner, another interested singer and a founding member of the initial Eugene Threshold Choir. On October 12, 2012, Sara and Bhavia met for the first time to consider re-organizing the group as a chapter of Threshold Choir International. They met at Bhavia's office at First Christian Church in Eugene. Sara wanted to postpone moving forward until after the holidays, but Bhavia was firm that they needed to keep the momentum going and get started right away. On October 29, 2012, the first rehearsal of the reorganized chapter was held in a meeting room at Cascade Health Solutions. Those present included Clair Van Bloem, Karen Stingle, Katherine Bragg, Loraine Baker Hanley, Norma Landy, Sara Mitchell, and Susan Hopkins. Karen served initially as the Music Director.

On November 5, 2012, the second rehearsal at Susan's home drew a total of eleven people. It was raining cats and dogs, but that didn't deter the group! On November 19, 2012, the third rehearsal was also held at Susan's home. On December 3, 2012, Sara signed a rental agreement with the Unitarian Universalist Church in Eugene. The church gave the reorganized chapter a special rental rate of \$20 per evening. (Note: The chapter met at the church for two rehearsals per month until June 2015.)

On January 21, 2013, Judith Ivy, who eventually became the group's beloved ongoing Music Director, attended a rehearsal for the first time. The beginning of a strong and precious alliance!

On March 23, 2013, the first meeting of emerging leaders in the new group met at Sara's home to ponder future directions. Most of those present agreed to serve on the Leadership Council. Those present included Susan, Judith, Clair, Bhavia, Sara, and Sophia Douglas.

On June 1, 2013, the chapter's first retreat was held at Sara's home. Kri Schlafer, Director of the Portland chapter, came for the day and offered the members her wisdom and guidance.

On June 25, 2013, under Judith's direction, the choir sang for its first public event at Cascade Hospice's Butterfly Release Memorial Service which was held at Good Samaritan Rehab Center.

On December 2, 2013, the choir held its first Sing at Hillside Heights Rehabilitation Center! Those present were Judith, Karen, Bhavia, Linda, Clair, Bev Forster, Susan, Julie Wolfram, and Sara.

On May, 2014, Judith, Susan, Clair and Sara recorded the choir's first practice CD with 10 songs, at Susan's home.

On June 19, 2014, the choir sang at a staff meeting at Cascade Hospice, announcing to the staff and to the world that the choir was ready to take referrals to sing for their hospice patients. This was only 19 months after the choir's initial organizational meeting! The choir got several referrals right away.

On Labor Day, 2014, Judith, Susan, Clair and Sara recorded a second practice CD, with 23 songs.

On September 28, 2014, the Eugene Register-Guard published an article about the chapter, "Peace and Harmony", along with an accompanying video on YouTube. Clair, Judith, Linda and Sara were featured, as they sang for Judith's mother, Reberta Gravos, who was then 101 years old and a patient with Cascade Hospice. This outstanding recognition and highlighting of the choir's mission and service sparked lots of inquiries and brought a huge influx of new singers.

Growing and Flowering

Having outgrown the meeting space at the Unitarian Universalist Church, in June 2015, the choir began rehearsing at a new location - the Center for Spiritual Living. On November 2, 2016, after approximately three months of Susan's diligent paperwork to obtain an EIN, the chapter was registered with the State of Oregon as a non-profit corporation. Susan and Sara signed the final papers with Oregon Community Credit Union, enabling the choir to have its own bank accounts. As of November, 2017, the chapter celebrated its fifth anniversary! The chapter had 34 members - approximately five times the number of singers at its first meeting. There were eight Song Leaders: Clair, Gyl, Judith, Linda, Maggie, Norma, Sara, Susan; plus, Barbara Dellenback, who was in training.

The choir was singing at a variety of venues, including Hillside Heights Rehab Center, Cascade Manor, Pete Moore Hospice House, and Creswell Care Center, plus responding to requests to sing in private homes. 11/3/16 SLM Rev. 11/28/17 Rev. 2/7/18

Current Status

In 2025, the chapter was pleased to celebrate its 13th anniversary as a reconfigured chapter, subsequently known as Eugene Threshold Singers. The group's membership grew to a maximum

of 45 members, prior to covid. The numbers dwindled during the pandemic, but the group survived all of that, relying on Zoom rehearsals and meeting in small pods of singers.

The choir now has 24 members, and is welcoming several new singers. The chapter is very busy, with an average of at least fifteen Sings per month at the local inpatient hospice facility and several long-term care and rehab facilities. The choir also have individual Sings for hospice patients. Also, the chapter offers a Song Bath every few months at Sara's independent living retirement community, and has an average of 18 members at rehearsals.