

CHAPTER HISTORY OF SOUTH SOUND THRESHOLD SINGERS

Chapter Beginnings

In the summer of 2014, three Tacoma-area women reached out to Threshold Choir International, looking to join a local chapter. When told there was none, they joined forces and formed one with the help of leaders from the Bellingham Threshold Singers and our official TCI mentor, Charlotte Million, of the Mile High Threshold Choir.

Early participants to the South Sound Threshold Singers (SSTS) were recruited at a weekend retreat with Threshold singer, Barbara McAfee. Free rehearsal space was donated by Mountainview Funeral Home in Lakewood, and early music leadership was proffered by Mountainview chaplain, Kai Vic.

Membership

SSTS is fortunate to still have four active founding members. While the majority of singers are retired women, the chapter cherishes its several younger members and male singer. The chapter hopes to recruit new members in the future. While most of those inquiring about threshold singing have no connection to the group, a pair of sisters-in-law have sung with SSTS since the beginning. More recently, a daughter and wife of two members have begun attending rehearsals.

Community Service

SSTS's first regular facility sings began for the Veterans Administration Community Living Center at American Lake in the fall of 2015. The choir has continued to sing to the resident or recuperating vets there twice a month for the last decade. The choir sings at bedside, in common areas, and in their locked memory unit.

In early 2017, SSTS began providing bedside sings for the Franciscan Hospice House -- a facility that provides compassionate care to those at the end-of-life, giving respite to end-of-life caregivers when needed, and where medications could be adjusted under careful supervision. Franciscan Hospice House provided excellent volunteer training and those that sang there truly felt the sanctity of singing to those at the end-of-life. Unfortunately, the Pandemic put an end to our relationship with Hospice House. Post-Pandemic, the facility reduced their volunteer coordinators and eliminated on-site volunteers.

Leadership

SSTS is currently led by its administrative director and music director. Each facility has a lead and a 'second' member who arrange the 1-2 sings each month and generally serve as the anchor at those sings.

Impact of COVID-19

The Pandemic hit SSTS hard as it did all Threshold chapters. All sings and in-person rehearsals came to a grinding halt. Rehearsals became monthly Zoom calls and some of the members provided 20 to 30-minute phone sings to isolated seniors. As soon as members were allowed to sing together again, following TC and local health department guidelines, SSTS did. While the chapter was fortunate that none of our membership died due to COVID, several of our founding members retired from the group. After COVID became a time of rebuilding.

Current Status

SSTS has recently changed rehearsal spaces, moving to Immanuel Presbyterian Church in Tacoma. The chapter has taken on three new facilities: Eliseo, Heron's Key, and GenCare. Each are assisted-living facilities where SSTS first provide a 20-minute program of memory-stimulating music in the memory care wards and then go sing our more traditional threshold repertoire at the bedsides of those in hospice care.

The chapter is once again up to twelve active singers who sing 1-5 times a month at our regular facilities and service any home deathbed requested. The chapter continues to rehearse twice a month on the second and fourth Thursdays at 6:30-8 PM.

Seated: Beth Prevo (Founder), Paula Stuart (Founder), Karla Stoermer, Helen Lynch (Founder), Paula Foreman (Founder). Standing L to R: Jacque Schultz (Administrative Director), Rosemary Kallal, David Ramsey, Kiki Bell-Amoroso, Niki Bell (Music Director), Elizabeth Bowman, Janet Whitney, Crystal Hoshaw, Monica Valentine



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