

The DALLAS POST

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Members of the Wilkes-Barre chapter of the Barbershop Harmony Society present Singing Valentines every Valentine's Day. For \$50, members of the community can send their valentines a live performance from a quartet along with a card, candy and a rose. Members of a quartet, from left, are Tom Roberts, bass, Kingston; Phillip Brown, baritone, Shavertown; Justin Shaffern, lead, West Pittston; Bill Zdancewicz, tenor, Edwardsville.

Valentine singers

By REBECCA BRIA
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TO PURCHASE A SONG

To purchase a Singing Valentine from the Wilkes-Barre Chapter of the Barbershop Harmony Society, call 709-3716. A rose, candy and a card are included. Cost is \$50 which is donated to charity.

When a quartet from the Wilkes-Barre Chapter of the Barbershop Harmony Society entered former Senator Charles Lemmond's office in Dallas one Valentine's Day, the men pretended they really wanted to speak with the senator about a legislative matter.

As Lemmond walked down the hallway, the men, dressed in black tuxedos with red bow ties and cummerbunds, started singing "Let Me Call You Sweetheart."

The Singing Valentines Project was started in the Wyoming Valley in the early 1990s by members of the society.

For \$50, members of the community can send their valentines a live performance from a quartet along with a card, candy and a rose. The men sing "Let Me Call You Sweetheart," "The Story of a Rose" and, if time permits, "My Wild Irish Rose."

The Barbershop Harmony Society, a non-profit organization, donates all proceeds from the Singing Valentines Project to charity.

Phillip Brown, of Shavertown, who joined the society right out of high school and has been a member for 51 years, serves as the chairman of the Singing Valentines Project.

According to Brown, several days before Valentine's Day, all jobs are put into a computer and are divided according to time and location. Four quartets, consisting of a baritone, tenor, bass and lead singer, are each assigned to a part of the area between Scranton and Nanticoke. The men begin in the morning and try to end by 4:30 p.m. and often go the entire time without eating lunch or taking a break.

"It is one of the most wonderful experiences that any member in our entire society could ever experience," Brown said. "Everyone that goes out wants to go out next year. As grueling as it is, it's the most wonderful experience."

And the gigs come back each year as well. One annual engagement, which has once again been scheduled for this February 14, is the Meadows Nursing Center in Dallas. Brown says the society has been doing Singing Valentines at the Meadows for about 10 years.

Though many Singing Valentines

are delivered to businesses and homes, others go to nursing homes and hospitals. The men have even performed for terminally ill patients and others who were unaware of their surroundings.

Last year's Singing Valentines were especially demanding, thanks to Mother Nature. Up to one foot of snow and ice fell in the area on February 14, 2007. Brown and three other men were in the Scranton area.

"Our last stop was CMC and we were waiting for a gal to come out of the operating room, a nurse, and as we waited for her to scrub up, we saw on the TV the state police closed 81 South," Brown said. "And my bass looked at me and said, 'how are we going to get home?'"

After a slow go on Route 11, the men did safely arrive home around 8:30 p.m.

People have been telling Brown to expect it to be a slower year than the typical 50 appearances since the economy is in poor shape. But he is confident the state of the economy will not affect the number of orders the group receives.

For those planning on giving someone they love the special treat, Brown has some advice.

"The biggest part of it is if you can keep it a surprise," Brown said. "The surprise element is just unbelievable."



CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK/ FOR THE DALLAS POST

After serving as chairperson of the American Cancer Society Daffodil Days campaign at the Shavertown United Methodist Church, Helen Kishbaugh, of Dallas, is passing the torch to Joseph Bryan. Shown with Kishbaugh and Bryan is Kishbaugh's husband, Charles.

She's passing the daffodil torch

By REBECCA BRIA
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TO ORDER DAFFODILS

Call the Shavertown United Methodist Church at 675-3616 and ask for Joseph Bryan. Or, call the American Cancer Society Wyoming Valley Unit at 714-3320. The deadline for all pre-sale orders is Feb. 15. The Daffodil Days campaign is March 24-30.

Helen Kishbaugh called the American Cancer Society 16 years ago about its Daffodil Days campaign. She thought she could sell the flowers at the Shavertown United Methodist Church, her place of worship and was especially inspired to get involved because of a friend who had breast cancer. That first year, she sold three boxes of daffodils at the church.

In the last 10 years alone, Kishbaugh, of Dallas, has raised over \$8,000 for the American Cancer Society.

"They sort of sold themselves after the first couple of years," she said.

Now, at 86 years of age, Kishbaugh is retiring as head of the Daffodil Days campaign at the church and passing the torch to 33-year-old Joe Bryan, 33, of Wilkes-Barre, the Director of Christian Education at Shavertown United Methodist Church.

While specifically looking for people at the church to take over the project, Kishbaugh met Bryan, who was more than willing to fulfill the job.

"We all know somebody (who has cancer) so even if you don't want to have the flowers, you're making a donation," he said.

Both Kishbaugh and Bryan have been personally affected by the disease. Kishbaugh's husband, Charles, suffers from cancer and her brother has Merkel cell carcinoma, a type of skin cancer. Bryan's mother is a breast cancer survivor.

Being in charge of Daffodil Days at the church requires making phone calls to those who have ordered in the past to see if they are interested once again, recruiting new donors and placing the final order with the American Cancer Society. Kishbaugh, who sports a daffodil pin given to her by a friend, typically sold 150 bunches of daffodils a year. At the current price of \$8 a bunch, that amounts to approximately \$1200 a year.

"It was very rewarding to say you sold that many and you knew it was going to help," she said.

Kishbaugh's favorite part of the Daffodil Days drive was pick-up day, likening it to a homecoming where she would see so many church members and friends picking up their flowers.

A long-time active member of the community, Kishbaugh was a member of the Dallas Women's Club and Dallas Women's Choral Club for years. She knits and crochets prayer shawls with a group from church and she and her husband are members of the Meadows Nursing Center Auxiliary. The Kishbaughs have belonged to the Shavertown United Methodist Church since 1949, but Helen has been attending the church since the 1920s when she came to the Back Mountain by trolley to see her uncle who previously owned a store in Dallas.

In 1999, the couple moved from Shavertown to The Pines at Mercy Center, a retirement community in Dallas. One day, Kishbaugh invited a lonely woman to join her for lunch. The two enjoyed themselves so much, they decided to lunch together regularly. Kishbaugh began inviting other lonely residents and, before she knew it, the group had become too large for her house. The Brown Baggers were formed and Kishbaugh gained permission for the group to assemble in her church's lounge. A non-denominational group, The Brown Baggers meet for lunch at noon on the second Tuesday of every month at Shavertown United Methodist Church.

As for Bryan, he's been busy taking orders, hanging posters and putting reminders in the church bulletin. The Daffodil Days campaign runs March 24-30 when the flowers are picked up.

In addition to his position at the church and volunteer work with Daffodil Days, Bryan works at the Bear Creek Café on Saturdays and is attending classes at Wilkes University to earn his Master of Business Administration degree. He admits he was looking to become an active volunteer with the American Cancer Society when he was approached by Kishbaugh.

"It just feels like I'm giving back, helping out in some way," Bryan said.

Singing with the boychoir

By REBECCA BRIA
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Wilkes-Barre.

The boychoir, currently on a winter tour as part of its 70th anniversary celebration, will be joined by the Misericordia Choral Society for a gospel arrangement of the Hallelujah Chorus during its performance in Wilkes-Barre.

Boys in grades four through eight are eligible to be in the choir, which tours both nationally and internationally. The American Boychoir performs and records regularly with world-class artists and ensembles, including the Boston Symphony Orchestra, The Philadelphia Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, opera superstar Jessye Norman, pop diva Beyonce, Bobby McFerrin and the Trans-Siberian Orchestra.

"It's going to be really exciting to sing in front of all of my friends," Curtis said of his homecoming. "I love to be able to go back home."

The son of John and Judy Curtis, Curtis began singing at a young age. Although he never had professional training prior to The American Boychoir School, he comes from a musical family. His father teaches at Misericordia University and is the director of the Choral So-



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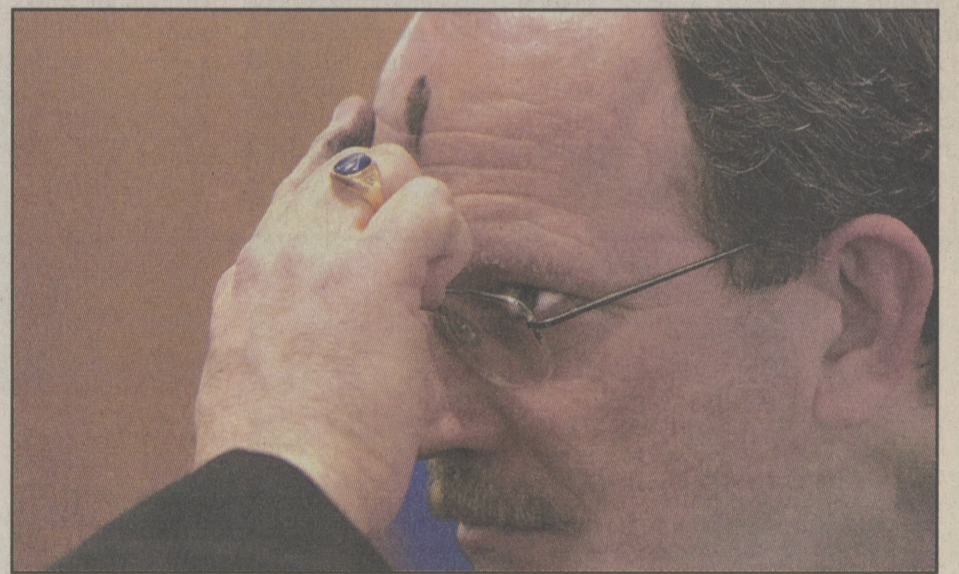
Jason Curtis, the son of John and Judy Curtis of Dallas, is a member of The American Boychoir and attends The American Boychoir School in Princeton, N.J. As part of the choir's "Celebrating Harmony 70th Anniversary Tour," Curtis and the Boychoir will perform at 7 p.m. on Sunday, Feb. 17, at St. Nicholas Church in Wilkes-Barre.

IF YOU GO

The American Boychoir Winter Tour, part of the 70th Anniversary Tour
Sunday, Feb. 17, at 7 p.m.
St. Nicholas Church, Wilkes-Barre
Tickets are \$20, \$10 for students and senior citizens and are available from the Misericordia box office by calling 674-6719 or from St. Nicholas parish office by calling 823-7736.

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ASH WEDNESDAY



CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK/ FOR THE DALLAS POST

Rev. Roger Griffith, pastor of Trinity Presbyterian Church in Dallas, places ashes in the sign of the cross on the head of Charles Borland on Ash Wednesday, marking the beginning of the Lenten season.

Were you born on February 29?

Are you looking forward to celebrating a "real" birthday this Leap Year? If so, The Dallas Post staff would like to talk to you. Call us at 970-7440 or e-mail us at news@mydallaspost.com.



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