

OUR TOWNS Hartington

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HCC Choir Sings Out To Give Back

Vocalists Perform At Area Masses As Part Of Annual Parish Tour

BY TRAVIS GULBRANDSON
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HARTINGTON, Neb. — This past weekend, the Cedar Catholic Choir of Cedar Catholic High School "gave back."

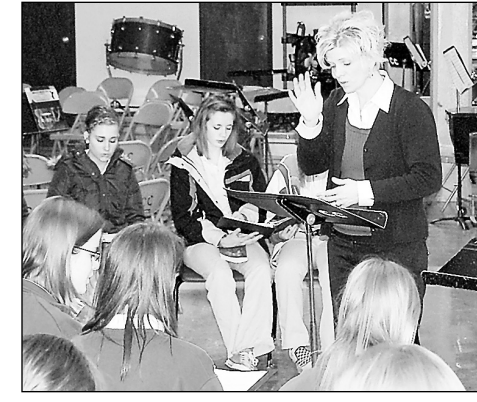
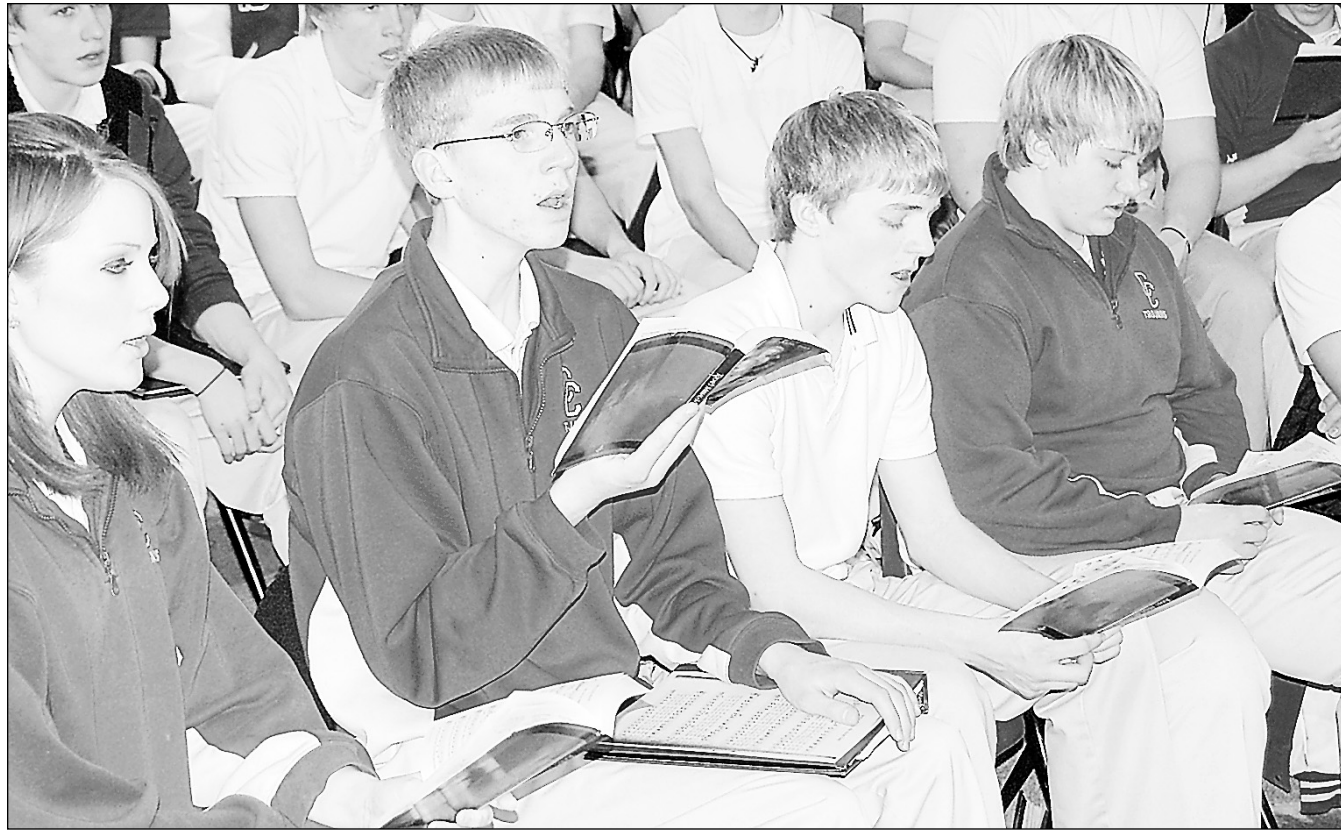
On Sunday, the choir performed the Mass for Saints Peter & Paul Catholic Church in Bow Valley, Neb., as part of its yearly parish tour.

"We're not there to perform or anything like that, but to be song leaders and lead people in prayer," said Joanne Hamilton, vocal music instructor for grades 3-12 at Holy Trinity Elementary and Cedar Catholic High School.

The tour, now in its third year, was started when area parent Bill Schaefer approached Hamilton about finding a way to give back to the communities for their support of the school.

"Our band program and our choir program (constitute) 75 percent of the kids in our school, and he said, 'We'll start with your groups. How do we give back?'" Hamilton said. "And this was a great way to do that, because it gives the parish musicians a Sunday off, and it's also just a good way for the kids to realize that this is a service that they can do."

By the end of this year's tour, the 89-member choir will have performed at seven Masses in communities like Hartington, Coleridge, Bloomfield and Yankton.



TRAVIS GULBRANDSON/P&D
LEFT: Hartington Cedar Catholic choir members (from left) Cassie Howey, Tim Pinkelman, Steven Thoenne and Derrick Klug rehearse with the rest of the choir last week at the school. The choir is performing at several area church Masses this spring as a means of connecting with the area Catholic community. RIGHT: Joanne Hamilton, vocal music instructor at Hartington Cedar Catholic High School, conducts a choir rehearsal Friday afternoon. The choir was preparing for one of the Masses in their yearly parish vocal tour.

"It's really nice to be able to go out to the communities, because they all give back to our school, and they are very appreciative, especially some of the smaller parishes," said choir member and Cedar Catholic senior Andrea Steffen. "They don't always have parish musicians on the weekends, so they don't always get to have music during the Masses, and they are very grateful that we are able to come and sing for them."

Eric Becker, another choir member and Cedar Catholic senior, added, "We have a lot of people say they really like it when we come. They look forward to it every year. I've had a few nuns

(in Yankton) come up to me and say they really appreciate us coming every year."

Each student is required to sign up for at least three Masses. "They don't have to go to every one, but at least three of them if they want to letter in choir," Hamilton said.

The Masses also go toward the students' service hours, she said.

The number of students who attend the Masses will often depend on the size of the parish.

"If we go to a real small church like Coleridge, I said just seniors and juniors, so I still got about 20," Hamilton said. "So (last) weekend, we go to Bow

Valley, which is a much bigger parish, and there's 60-some signed up...."

"It always amazes me how many kids I get to sign up for the weekend Masses," she said. "I think that really says something about the kids."

Hamilton said one of the tour aspects the students respond to the most is the opportunity to sing in their own parishes.

"They're not all from Hartington," she said. "They're from those outlying parishes, and it's neat to see them get excited when the other kids come to their home parish."

The historical aspect is important, as well.

"We were in Constance last year. That's a very small church, and the small group of kids that I had there thought it was a really neat church. So it's a way to get them out in those other parishes," Hamilton said.

Becker said the students also appreciate the time that Hamilton puts in to make the tour successful.

"Mrs. Hamilton is a really big part of that," he said. "She puts in a lot of work with the choir."

Hamilton said the students gain a lot not only from the tour, but from simply singing in the choir.

"I would say being in choir (helps students) realize that

music is bringing joy to other people, and it's a talent that they've been given that they can give back to other people," she said.

Steffen said she enjoys the choir because it gives her the opportunity "to express myself through music."

"It's just a fun time," Becker added. "We get stuff done, but most of the time it's just a fun time to be with your friends."

Hamilton said she hopes the tour will continue well into the future.

"I just think it's a great way to give back to the communities that have given so much to us," she said.

FIRE

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the fire department responded to each call. They racked up 2,890 man hours responding to calls and 1,735 man hours for training.

In 2008 (the latest year for which the figure has been calculated), the Independent Sector valued volunteer time at \$20.25 per hour, meaning the value of the time donated by Yankton Fire Department volunteers was more than \$93,000.

"We've got a terrific group of volunteers, and you can see from the stats that they put a whole lot of time into it," Kurtenbach said. "The time that was looked at in those stats was only part of it. They are also available to do school visits during Fire Prevention Week, they work our annual open house and other community events we become involved in."

The average response time within city limits was four minutes, 45 seconds, while the average response time in the rural district was 12 minutes, 18 seconds.

With the new fire station along 23rd Street going into service soon, Kurtenbach said he is hopeful that the average response times within city limits

will be shortened.

"It will really depend on where the calls are at," he said. "That tends to be a newer part of town, but as it ages, we're going to get more calls up there. We know it will cut down our response time in that part of town."

Kurtenbach said the department is looking forward to moving its offices and training to the new facility. A third fire engine will be put into service once that transition occurs.

"It was exciting when the citizens allowed us to build (the new fire station), and it's going to be even more exciting when we actually move into the building," Kurtenbach said.

Of course, it would be good for everyone if there is little need for fire response in 2010, he added. The weather so far this year should help toward that end.

"We just hope we have some moisture and don't get dry," Kurtenbach said. "We've got a good snowpack this year, so it looks like we're going to have a wet spring."

WOMEN

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Rezac said she was "very surprised and honored" to be recognized.

"All the nominees were wonderful candidates, all women of distinction," she said.

The nominees for the Outstanding Community Service Award included Dores Allen, Marjorie Gross, Carol Hamvas, Lori Lincoln, Nancy Sternquist, Nancy Teachout, Sister Margo Tschetter and Betty Viau.

The nominees for the Outstanding Professional Award included Carolyn Becker, Lois Halbur and Dr. Lori Hansen.

Monday's program also featured a presentation from school teacher, self-help author and motivational speaker Mary Kay Mueller, whose most recent book is entitled, "8 to Great: The Powerful Process for Positive Change."

Mueller, who lives in Omaha, spoke on the importance of having dreams and how to achieve

them. A big part of the process is positive thinking, she said.

People must also invest in the present, rather than focus on the past.

Mueller said people shouldn't go around saying, "I should have, they should have." You know what I teach in eighth grade? Don't 'should' on yourself, don't 'should' on other people."

Having a dream is believing it is possible, she said.

"It's just a process," Mueller said. "If you just follow your dreams and the process, and once you understand the process, every dream will come true."

Monday's luncheon was sponsored in part by Hy-Vee, Mount Marty College, Mountain Man Fruit & Nut Company, Pied Piper Flower Shop, Sen. Jean Hunhoff, the Yankton Area Chamber of Commerce and Yankton Medical Clinic.

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