

Upbeat

The Newsletter of the Trenton Children's Chorus

Trenton
Children's
Chorus

Making Music
Making Friends
Making a Difference

Mission Statement

To give young people the chance to sing a wide range of choral literature, especially those who might not otherwise have an opportunity to do so in an environment where they grow and learn about themselves, about other young people from different backgrounds, and about the world and their opportunities in it.

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Making a Difference: TCC Launches Learning Academy

by Gloria Bethea, Learning Academy Director



Photo by: Nancy L. Hodges

A member of the Learning Academy hard at work.

The motto of the Trenton Children's Chorus is "*Making Music, Making Friends, Making a Difference.*" This fall our determination to make a difference for our choristers resulted in the launch of a new program, the TCC Learning Academy. Every Wednesday afternoon the Learning Academy brings together selected choristers of Trenton Children's Chorus and college students with the following three overarching goals for each of our Learners:

- to achieve academic proficiency or excellence, as applicable, in literacy and mathematics by the end of the school year
- to develop a sense of himself or herself as a learner (aware of strengths, weaknesses, preferences, gifts and interests)
- to foster school-adaptive skills: time management, persistence, academic task orientation and understanding.

The Learning Academy program is based on three core beliefs:

- A broad range of individual assessments is critical to establish each Learner's current status and monitor his or her progress
- Sustained individual attention will result in measurable progress for each Learner
- Families must be involved and informed about all of the activities of the Learning Academy so that they can be part of the Learner's progress.

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Making a Difference: TCC Launches Learning Academy

by Gloria Bethea, Learning Academy Director

(continued from page 1)

To implement these beliefs, we recruited local college students to serve as Individual Learning Coaches under my direction and tutelage. We are using a battery of assessments that includes traditional assessments of literacy and mathematics skills as well as attitude surveys and information processing assessments. I visited each Learner's family at home, and they participated in part of the information processing assessment. From the initial results of these assessments, an Individual Learning Plan was developed for each Learner. The Academy's Learning Coaches use the Individual Learning Plan to guide their work with each student, both in weekly, face-to-face sessions and in their research, conversations, emails, and other interactions with the Learners.

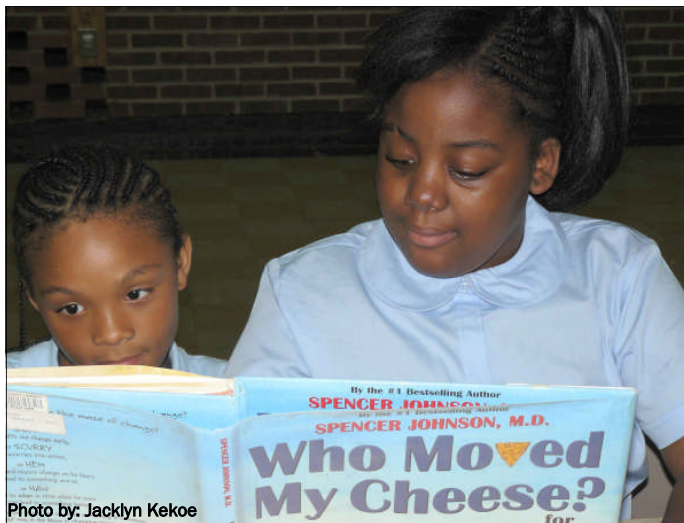


Photo by: Jacklyn Kekoe

Learners read about adapting to change in *Who Moved My Cheese?*

We began the program year with efforts to motivate our Learners to strive for academic excellence. We chose an Academy poem, *The Man in the Glass* by Peter "Dale" Winbrow, Sr., and an Academy theme song, *Man in the Mirror*, words and music by Siedah Garret and Glen Ballard and recorded by The Boys Choir of Harlem. At the start, we used a creative and fun approach to help our Learners to identify their individual patterns of reacting to changes in their lives. Together we read *Who Moved My Cheese?* by Spencer Johnson, MD, with each Learner assuming a role. Then we asked Learners to identify which of the story's characters best typified their responses to change. They not only enjoyed this humorous narrative, but they also acquired from it a non-intimidating and effective lifetime tool of introspection; they learned to assess how they are responding to life's changes and to contemplate the most successful adaptive pattern of response.

Like Trenton Children's Chorus, our Learning Coaches are determined to *make a difference* in the life of their assigned Learner. All of our Coaches had experience working with youth prior to serving in our Academy; however, even more than their skill sets and experiences, they share a deep commitment to serving our Learners. Colleen Roberts, a junior at Rider University, carries a heavy course load this semester and had a major role in her University's production of *The Wedding Singer*. Yet Ms. Roberts takes time to serve as a Coach. "It is a great feeling to be able to slow down my own life to make a difference in someone else's. I always leave (the Academy) feeling good about myself."

Besides being reminded that indeed it is more blessed to give than to receive, our Coaches are themselves inspired by their service. Mercer County Community College student Sandra Volcy states, "For the last few weeks, I have been a Learning Coach for the Trenton Children's Chorus' Learning Academy. And so far it has been a personal learning experience and growth. I have tutored children in the past, but working with the Learning Academy has shown me the potential of the youth of our community and the need of more institutions, like the Trenton Children's Chorus' Learning Academy, to develop and nurture their minds. This working experience is influencing me to seek to be more involved in our community and with our youth in particular."

We are confident that we can make a difference in the lives of these choristers, and we intend to evaluate what happened to them this year, build on our successes and improve our approach as the Academy grows.

You can make a difference! Whisper a prayer. Donate to the cause. Share a talent.



Photo by: Jacklyn Kekoe

Gloria Bethea and Learners enjoying a light moment.

The Best Summer of My Life



Photo by Valerie Nelson

Victoria, Melissa, Keiannadra and Jahmai are all smiles after the closing concert at Camp Albemarle. Missing: Azhaneet

A record number of Trenton Children's Chorus singers attended camp this summer, thanks to fundraising concerts, scholarships given by camps, and a very generous response to the TCC Camp Scholarship Drive. *For the first time ever, TCC was able to offer a scholarship to every child old enough to attend camp.*

Twenty-four Trenton elementary school students spent the month of July at Summer Stars, an academic and cultural day camp held at Stuart Country Day School. Favorite activities included band, dance, art, and swimming. "My group made a video to send to President Obama on how to make the world a better place," said Tabia, a 6th grade student from Gregory Elementary. "I liked just about everything. I want to be a counselor."

"I liked art and math," said Grace, a 4th grade student from International Charter School. "I'm good at math." Sa'nyei, a 3rd grade student attending Joyce Kilmer Elementary especially liked the talent show and swimming. "I'm going back next year," she said.

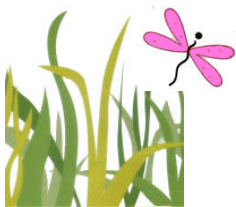
Five children attended Camp Albemarle at the American Boychoir School. Three scholarships to Camp Albemarle, each worth \$1,400, were raised at the Hopewell Valley Chorus' annual Spring into Song concert. The American Boychoir School donated a fourth scholarship and a fundraiser held by the Princeton Girlchoir underwrote a fifth. "I made so many new friends and had so much fun," said 7th grader Victoria. "The concert was great and we sounded awesome. This was the best summer of my life! Thanks for what you did for me."

Choir members also attended Vocal Camp at Westminster Choir College, CityArts Summer Arts Camp, Blue Mountain Festival Camp, Environmental Camp at the Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed, Camp Johnsonburg, and Camp Lawrenceville.

To those who made camp possible, thank you for providing a summer of growth, learning, and the joy of just being a kid.

SAVE THE DATE

April 1, 2012 - **SPRING INTO SONG** - a community concert hosted by the Hopewell Valley Chorus, 2 to 4 PM, UU Church of Washington Crossing. Free-will offering will support TCC scholarships to Camp Albemarle.



A Happy Place to Sing, Grow and Make Music: A Parent's Perspective

by Skip Harrison

My wife and I have one goal for our sons, Jeremy and Tristan: to broaden their view of the world by exposing them to as many positive, teachable experiences as we can. Our boys love music, all kinds of music-- from Crosby, Stills and Nash to Michael Jackson. We asked a parent of our sons' schoolmates and she recommended the Trenton Children's Chorus. She spoke glowingly of the opportunity for her child to express herself through music, and the enrichment that is a part of membership, from tutoring to summer learning activities.

"My favorite part of chorus is when Miss Russo invites us to play the instruments. I liked when I got moved up to the big kids' Chorus. I really liked my summer at Stuart. I liked to be in nature. I want to go again." —Jeremy, age 7

A year ago, my boys and I visited a rehearsal. I assumed we would meet the Chorus leaders that day and, maybe, have a chance to listen to the boys and girls rehearse. I was happy to see children, in a safe and pleasant environment, learning not only songs from the music instructor, but discipline and social skills that will take them far. Observing the young people enjoying themselves and singing their hearts out for a Chorus leader instilling the same procedure and rules by which we live at home sold me. Jeremy

and Tristan watched and listened during that visit and were excited to join in the singing at the invitation of the Chorus director. They didn't want to leave. They were glad to meet children who loved to sing and make music as much as they do.

"I like when we march down the stairs at the end of practice, after singing. I like snack time at the beginning. I like our class with Mr. Thomas. We get to play drums and the instruments. I get to see all my friends at Chorus."

—Tristan, age 5

A year later, my boys have grown as singers and individuals. Mentors and personnel working with the Chorus encourage them musically as they sing and drum, and intellectually during tutoring sessions prior to rehearsal. They are proud and confident to stand before crowds and sing when the Chorus performs. I am at ease watching them learn from the older Chorus members, who model behavior at rehearsal and in the community for Jeremy and Tristan to follow. Hopefully, they too will become models for children who visit a Chorus rehearsal, in search of a creative way to express themselves and to learn. If a mom or dad asks me to recommend such an opportunity, I will tell them about the Trenton Children's Chorus.

PLEASE COME

Trenton Children's Chorus

Patricia Thel, Artistic Director

Presents

A Winter Concert

Thursday Evening

December 15, 2011

6:00 PM

Covenant Presbyterian Church
471 Parkway Avenue, Trenton

Free-will offering



A New Choir for Young Singers



Photo by Tom O'Neill

Members of the Choral Readiness Choir lift their voices in song!

To keep up with growing enrollment and to accommodate children waiting to get into the program, TCC launched a new choir in October.

Made up of 2nd and 3rd grade singers and directed by Britany Russo, the Choral Readiness Choir meets twice a week and utilizes poems, rhymes, games, songs, and movement to teach to musical skills. Children also learn to play Orff-Schulwerk instruments— special wooden glockenspiels, metal xylophones, drums and other percussion instruments.

The Choral Readiness Choir will make their debut at TCC Winter Concert on December 15 at 6 PM.

A Magical Evening

The Development Committee is happy to report that One Voice, TCC's fundraising event on October 1st, was a huge success and exceeded all expectations. Intended as both a friend-raiser and a fundraiser, we raised more than \$22,000 and introduced TCC to a broader group of donors.

The evening featured a small silent auction organized by Patti and Eliot Daley with wonderful dinners and vacation homes plus an amazing video produced by Paul Budline

that beautifully captured TCC's mission. Go to our website to see it!!

Thanks go out to the Chairs of the event— Tanice Fitzpatrick, Harriett Huston and Kate Lindseth— as well as to the incredibly generous support of our committee and our Patrons. We are particularly grateful for a gift of \$2,500 from Colgate Palmolive, a long time supporter of TCC. It was a magical evening. Thanks go out to all who made it

Volunteers Keep Things Humming



Photo by Tom O'Neill

Teen volunteer Julia Tazelaar from Nassau Presbyterian Church in Princeton helps a chorister with homework.



Photo by Tom O'Neill

Geri Jarmon from Shiloh Baptist Church in Trenton serves snack to a hungry singer.

The generous support of the following individuals, corporations, and foundations allows the Trenton Children's Chorus to continue to touch the lives of young people — and to make great friends and music doing so. Thank you all.

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AND SPECIAL THANKS TO
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Photo by: Beth Linnerson Daly

Choir Adds Music and Meaning to September 11 Ceremony



Photo courtesy of Michael Wargo

Members of the Trenton Children's Chorus and the Westminster Conservatory Children's Choir performed at the dedication of the Mercer County September 11 Memorial.

One Voice, the collaborative choir of the Trenton Children's Chorus and the Westminster Conservatory Children's Choir, performed for the dedication ceremony of the Mercer County September 11 Memorial. Too young to remember the tragedy, they watched reverently as veterans and current members of the armed services, firefighters, EMTs, police, scout troops, and community members

gathered at the monument site in Mercer County Park. Following the salute to the flag, they sang *The Star Spangled Banner*, accompanied by guitarist James Day.

The Rev. David A. Davis of Nassau Presbyterian Church in Princeton gave the invocation and Mercer County Executive Brian M. Hughes offered remarks, after which the choir sang *America the Beautiful*.

"The words we sang were not just words but a reminder of a country that comes together as one in a time of need," said TCC member Tilaya, a ninth-grade student at Villa Victoria Academy. "The ceremony was both memorable and meaningful."

The Rev. Darrell L. Armstrong of Shiloh Baptist Church in Trenton closed the ceremony with a benediction, and the crowd stood silently as a lone bagpiper played *Amazing Grace*.

The newly erected monument bears the words of Booker T. Washington. "There are two ways of exerting one's strength: one is pushing down, the other is pulling up."



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