

# Viking songbirds head to Portland

**Judy Hoyle**  
*IVN Contributing Writer*

In only a few weeks, 20 lucky Lorna Byrne Middle School (LBMS) students will compete in the 43rd annual Best in the Northwest Choir Festival. The competition will take place in Portland May 6. The students will sing French and Spanish songs and English madrigals.

Local residents will have the opportunity to hear this advanced choir perform at a free Festival Concert March 30 at 7 p.m. in the Jamie Scott Memorial Gym. The concert will feature music from around the world and include all the school's music groups, including beginning and advanced bands and beginning choir. Donations of baked goods to be sold at this concert are requested to help raise funds for the trip.

Since 1974, the University of Portland has hosted "the finest school choirs in the region," according to their website. LBMS students and four chaperones will journey to Portland May 5, and compete May 6. They'll also have the opportunity to see the Portland Zoo.

Each choir will be given approximately 15 minutes to present a mini-concert, with a tight schedule of a new choir starting every 25 minutes throughout the day. This will be the first time the Illinois Valley will be represented at this prestigious event. A total of 15 choirs will compete.

LBMS music instructor Sean McKee said, "This will be a wonderful chance for the kids to see one of the great cities in our country, experience the university and hear other choirs."

The students have been

working diligently to raise the needed \$4,000, including earning \$800 bagging groceries at Shop Smart in March. They will be volunteering at Shop Smart again April 1 and 2. They've also sold See's Candy. To date, \$2,000 has been raised. The cost for the school bus alone will be \$1,000.

A \$300 grant was awarded by the Mary Moulton Family Vocal Music Fund, administered by Josephine Community Education Fund. McKee states the Moulton family has donated thousands over the years to Three Rivers School District (TRSD) high school programs. He believes this is the first time a middle school choir has been awarded this grant. In addition, Jefferson State Financial Group has donated \$100.

Those interested in donating cash are asked to mail their check to Lorna Byrne Middle School, 101 S. Junction Ave., Cave Junction, 97523. The checks should be made out to LBMS with "Choir Trip Donation" on the memo line.

LBMS is the only middle school in the Three Rivers School District (TRSD) with a vocal music program. McKee organizes a full music program concert at the conclusion of each of the school year quarters.

Although the music program is an elective serving around 100 students, Principal Scott Polen has found funding for 40 ukuleles for an innovative new enrichment opportunity available to all the students.

Polen said, "The

ukuleles were an idea Sean had and after careful consideration, I felt it was necessary that we invest, using money we had saved from years past. It turned out great!"

This will be the ninth year McKee has taught for TRSD after teaching in the Anaheim, California school district for 15 years. He has also worked several years for the Britt Festival summer music program and is co-director of Jefferson Baroque Orchestra.

Students who were interviewed are looking forward to the competition. Samantha Conrad said, "I love music. We were scared at first, but now, we sound good, I think."

Joshua Graves said, "I'm really excited to finally be able to compete against the other schools."

Davin White pointed out, "We're the only small school in the competition."

And Annie Hertler stated, "I'm happy this is something we're not

doing alone. This is a team effort. We can make music and make

people surprised, happy, and maybe even make them cry a little."



(Courtesy photo for The Illinois Valley News)

**LBMS music teacher Sean McKee leads his choir students in preparation for the upcoming competition.**



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