



Sandy Mountain Singer Tami Duncan steps to the microphone to do a solo part. At her right and left are Andrea Thorsell and Pam Nugent.



Susan Nelson leads the Sandy Mountain Singers through one of their upbeat tunes. Photos by Christine Bierman

Singers' lyrics praise Sandy

by CHRISTINE BIERMAN

"Almost heaven,
Sandy, Oregon.
Cascade Mountains
Flowing, rippling rivers.
Life is older,
older than the trees,
younger than the mountains
blowing like a breeze.
Country road,
take me home
to the place I belong
Sandy, Oregon
Mountain Singers
Take me home
down Sandy roads."

The lyrics may ring familiar but the singers behind them belong to a new musical group formed this summer in the Sandy area.

They are The Sandy Mountain Singers, led by director Susan Nelson of the Firwood area. Their theme song is "Country Road" made popular by the internationally-known star, John Denver. And as one can see, the Sandy Mountain Singers have customized the lyrics to give them a local appeal; the original song was about West Virginian mountains.

The Sandy Mountain Singers, though, sing of more than mountains. Their latest program consists of pop, rock-and-roll, country, and gospel music, varying in pace.

The group is the outgrowth of a spring musical production coordinated by Nelson last school year at Firwood School.

"When school was out, they didn't want to stop singing," Nelson said.

So she agreed to carry on with the group into and beyond the summer. In the last 2½ months, they have performed at Calamity Jane's restaurant, the Kiwanis, the Gresham Senior Center, St. Jude's Nursing Home, Sandy Mountain Festival and Troutdale Festival, appearing twice at most of those. Their float captured a blue ribbon at the Troutdale parade.

"Whenever I see a need for kids, I try to hop in and do something about it," said Nelson, a mother in many different ways. She has cared for 36 foster children in her home plus adopted and natural children.

Besides two-hour practices twice weekly, the group's future plans include performances Saturday (Aug. 10) at Gresham's Frontier Days and Fairlawn Care Center, and a musical at Christmas time.

The Sandy Mountain Singers make their song selections from a catalog of 1,500 tunes accompanying the Singing Machine that provides them with pre-recorded background music. Susan's husband, Richard, is in charge of sound for the group.

Nelson hopes to enlarge the group to 40-50 youngsters, after auditions scheduled for 7:30-9 p.m. Sept. 9-10 at Calamity Jane's in Sandy.

Once school resumes, Nelson said that the group will serve as a complement to the schools' music departments and as an outlet for non-

athletes.

"If they're not into sports, there's not much for them to do," said Nelson, whose children Tami and Justin sing in the group.

And though a new group, the singers already have started a tradition: they routinely close performances with an audience sing-along of their theme tune, Nelson says.

Besides showcasing young talent, the purpose of The Sandy Mountain Singers is to instill in youngsters the importance of being on time, hygiene, pride in self, and teamwork, she says.

As an example of her belief in commitment, Nelson asks singers and their parents to sign contracts acknowledging their—and her—responsibilities.

Nelson comes to the group with training in voice and piano and years of experience with church choirs. But what counts most, in her view, is "...an absolute love of kids and music."

In performances recently at Calamity Jane's and Meinig Park, Nelson publicly praised her singers and seemed to hold great expectations for them. "I've built a rapport with the kids. I love them and they know it," she explained.

All the kids basically call me "Mom," Nelson said.

Besides Nelson's own children, the group includes: Heather Johnson, Steven Wolff, Kim Riggs, Pam Nugent, Peter Herget, Sara

Stankewitsch, Trisha Edwards, Jill Craig, Ryan Grantz, Andrea Thorsell, Annelie Vanbeek, Kirsten Walker, Michelle Johnson, Jimmy Craig, Kathy Johnson and Monica Orwig.

The Sandy Mountain Singers also will raise funds at a yard and bake sale from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 17, at 17915 Southeast Stephens, off of Division and 181st in Portland. They chose Portland since a sale there may draw more customers than in Sandy, Nelson says.

Those wishing to donate yard sale items or baked goods, or to learn more about the upcoming auditions may call Nelson at 668-9661.

Sandy co-op preschool has openings

The Sandy Cooperative Preschool has openings for 3-year-olds in classes starting Sept. 4, say school officials.

The school also will offer parenting courses later in the fall.

Karen Wilson will teach 3-year-olds who will meet from 9-11:30 a.m. Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, says Dayna Rich. The cost is \$12 monthly for one day a week of attendance, \$20 monthly for two days a week, or \$25 monthly for three days.

Parental involvement is stressed.

Those interested in registering their child(ren) may call Rich at 668-7280 or Carol LaBrie at 668-7180.

Parenting classes starting in October will be offered to the public for a nominal fee, according to the school. They will be free of charge for co-op members.

Information on those classes may be obtained from Deb Shaver at 668-8858.

In other school news, its rainbow-splashed float in the Sandy Mountain Festival parade claimed a first-prize ribbon. The rainbow is the school's logo. Students riding on the float dressed according to what they want to be when they grow up.

Sales tax topic at chamber lunch

A representative of People for a Better Oregon will speak on behalf of the proposed 5 percent state sales tax at a Sandy Area Chamber of Commerce luncheon Tuesday, said program chairman Bill Chesterfield.

Dr. Chuck Clemans will discuss the benefits of the proposal during the noon meeting at the Tollgate Inn. The public is welcome to attend.

Details on Clemans' background were unavailable by deadline.

His presentation counters the anti-sales tax position provided to the Chamber of Commerce by T. Duane Potter of the Citizens Opposed to Sales Tax (COST) group here on Aug. 6.

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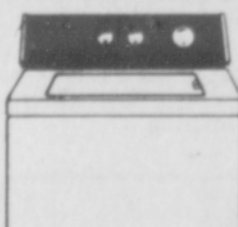


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