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PHOTO BY COLIN MURPHEY

The Cannon Beach Chorus rehearses last week in preparation for performances that will celebrate the 30th anniversary of the group.

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### Humble origins

Buehler, who started as the conductor in 2010, is the former director of Choral Studies at Baker University in Kansas and has led a variety of community and collegiate choirs for more than 40 years. He moved to Cannon Beach to be closer to his grandkids, but over the past eight years Cannon Beach has managed to stand out in the chorale department as well.

"It's amazing to be as healthy as we are at 30 years," Buehler said. "Most community choirs in a town the size of Cannon Beach don't grow to include members from other communities. When in this day and age our area of existence seems to be getting smaller, every person brings that sense of community (to the choir)."

But what is now a robust, four-part choir was born in 1988 from the humble beginnings of a dozen or so people who decided within the walls of a local recording studio that starting a community choir could be fun.

Carole Whitlock, a long-time Cannon Beach resident, was one of those founding

members. The original director, Danny Lawson, owned a recording studio in Sandpiper Square at the time, which served as the group's first rehearsal space.

"We worked in the same building, and we talked about how it would fun to organize a group to sing," she said. "So we did."

Whitlock sang with the group until 2000, weathering a number of venue and director changes. Averaging only 12 to 20 members, the group struggled to maintain enough voices, but it didn't stop them from performing all over town at venues like Cannon Beach City Park, local churches, the Coaster Theatre, and eventually Carnegie Hall in New York City.

### Joy, despair, healing, hope

In the beginning, most of the music the group sang leaned toward rock n' roll and musical theater — a large departure from the current group's classical bent.

"There weren't a lot of options at the time for singing, so it was a special opportunity," Whitlock said.

Since then, Susan Glarum, the one member of the chorus who has been

involved since its founding, said she has seen the chorus ebb and flow when it comes to participation, quality and style.

"It just keeps getting better and better," she said. "I look forward to the camaraderie when I come to practice. I wouldn't see all these people other than right here, working toward a common goal."

For Buehler, so many people coming from such different backgrounds to create something together is what makes directing a community chorus special.

"For a specific moment, we all focus on a product together," he said, "and I don't know how many things in life go that way."

With diversity comes challenges as well. With a variety of skill levels and ages, Buehler is faced with meeting everyone where they're at in terms of technique and musicianship.

But working on those challenges every Monday night is what makes this job best, he said.

"Music does things to us when we do music," he said. "In our choir, we can show joy, despair, healing and hope. It makes the community feel more." 