

Choir group gives back to the community

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The Stairwell Carollers started as a group of four students who sang in the residence stairwells at the University of Ottawa back in the 1970s.

“(We sang in the stairwells) because of the echo and because the students could hear us,” said Holly Massie, who’s an original member of the carollers.

Her husband, Pete, started the group which sings secular songs from the Renaissance period and during the holiday season sing a variety of Christmas carols in many different languages.

Over the years, the choir has grown from four members to nearly 30 and has had a community-first approach to their performances. They are a non-profit group that has raised more than \$43,000 for local Ottawa and Gatineau charities through the sale of concert tickets, CDs and cookbooks.

This holiday season, the group is donating \$2,000 to Harmony House, an Ottawa women’s shelter.

“We ask all the choir members to submit suggestions for local charities that they think need help,” said Massie, adding the group votes on which charity should receive the \$2,000 gift. “The spirit of Christmas is giving and generosity, kindness and community, so this is what we can do. It has been a very organic journey, the development of this group. And very personal to Pete and I.”

The Stairwell Carollers focus on the true meaning of Christmas and the group likes to spread happiness among those who listen to their music.

“We focus on having a tremendous time singing this beautiful music and getting our joyful message out to everyone,” Massie said. “Since we are a completely non-denominational group, we like to think our presentation is inclusive and anyone listening can be inspired, even if they are not Christian.”

In addition to giving to Harmony House, the group is also working to raise money for other charities throughout the holiday season.

On Dec 10, the group performed *Stille Nacht*, their 2011 Christmas concert, at Woodroffe United Church. Proceeds from that event went to support charities working with the Stairwell Carollers and Woodroffe United Church.

On Dec. 17, the group will perform

Stille Nacht

at St. Columba Anglican Church at 24 Sandridge Rd. at 7:30 p.m.

Massie said proceeds from that event will help the group produce their new CD in the new year.

For those interested in donating to the group, their CDs and cookbook are all available on their website as well as their concert listing at www.stairwellcarollers.com. The carollers are also active on YouTube, Twitter and Facebook.



The Stairwell Carollers have performed at many locations across Ottawa, including the Byward Market and most recently, Woodroffe United Church on Dec. 10.