

MUSICAL GIFTS



Redondo Beach resident Bob Rhinehart, back row center, performs with the chorale.

BY SANDY COHEN, DAILY BREEZE

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The Angel City Chorale, above, performs at the Wilshire Methodist Church in Los Angeles during a recent holiday concert. Music director Sue Fink, right, who founded the chorale in 1993, points to the diversity of the group's more than 100 members. "The music really pulls us all together," Fink says.

What's next?

■ See the Angel City Chorale perform at the 42nd annual Christmas Eve Holiday Celebration at 8:30 p.m. Dec. 24 at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, 135 N. Grand Ave., Los Angeles. Go to www.angelcitychorale.com.



Angel City Chorale visits shelters, hospitals to cheer area's needy with songs and supplies

They do gospel. They do folk songs. Spirituals. Christmas songs. Hebrew songs. R & B and classical tunes.

With 100 members from all over the South Bay and Los Angeles, the Angel City Chorale can perform just about any kind of music.

Today they take their talent on the road, bringing gifts — both material and musical — to homeless shelters, hospitals and retirement homes as part of their annual daylong Tour of Hope.

"To me, that's what the holidays are all about," said Manhattan Beach resident Susan Harris, 48, who joined the chorale in 1996. "Not only to see how others are living and be grateful for all we've got, but to help them, however we can. And I can't think of a better way to do that than music."

For the past five years, the chorale has brought private performances, along with thousands of goodie bags, to some of the neediest people in Los Angeles. And many singers said the Tour of Hope is the best part of the holiday season.

"To me, it's the highlight of the year," said chorale member Emily Sanders, music instructor for the Manhattan Beach Unified School District. "It's the most fulfilling thing I've done in a long time. These people never get to hear choral music and they love it. It makes me feel like we're truly giving them a gift."

That's fitting because members of the chorale feel the group itself is a gift. Not affili-

CHORALE: Singers cheer up needy in shelters, hospitals

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ated with any church, city or corporation, the Angel City Chorale draws from all walks of life and makes its own rules. Every religion, race, profession and political persuasion is represented and their musical repertoire is just as diverse. The group gives local singers an opportunity to perform in a professional setting without having to give up their day job.

"I've always loved to sing," said Bob Rhinehart, 51, of Redondo Beach. "I got tired of singing in the shower and needed another outlet."

Couples have met and married in the group, and members come together to help each other through tough situations, including relationship break-ups, financial hardships and deaths of loved ones. Non-singing spouses volunteer at the group's events and members spend time together long after the rehearsals and concerts are through.

"This group is building community," said conductor Sue Fink, who founded the chorale in 1993. "We live in a large city and you can feel so lost. What the chorale provides is sort of a small town within the city.

"We have quite the mixture of people — straight and gay, black and white. The music really pulls us all together."

Fink taught vocal lessons at McCabe's Guitar Shop in Santa Monica when she got the idea to



KIM HAGGERTY ZYLIUS/DAILY BREE

Choir member Murray Gershenz sings during a recent candle-lighting ceremony in Los Angeles.

start a community choir. She began with 18 singers and three songs.

Two years later, Fink's group outgrew its rehearsal spot at McCabe's. It moved to a Santa Monica church, and Fink held auditions to encourage more skilled singers to participate. The group has grown to more than 100 members, with concert performances in spring and winter, the annual

Tour of Hope and two compact discs.

"More and more solo singers have become attracted to it, so it's become this conglomeration of different styles," Fink said. "We find a way for all the styles to meet."

Sanders, the Manhattan Beach music teacher, said participating in the choir has broadened her musical horizons and helped her

professionally.

"It's a unique group and I feel very privileged to be a part of it," she said. "It's enriched my life and certainly helped my teach-

"My biggest agenda as a teacher is to give (students) a sense of music they will always carry with them. The choir help keep that alive."