

The story of the Arnprior Community Choir

MARILYN CAMPBELL

It's a warm, early September evening, and you're strolling past the Legion Hall on Daniel Street in Arnprior.

As you walk past the hall, you could swear that you can hear Christmas music being sung. But in September?

Yes — in September.

What you heard was the Arnprior Community Choir (ACC) beginning its 27th year of rehearsals for its recent December Christmas concert Sing Noel.

Everyone will agree that Arnprior is a real hockey and sports town.

But many are unaware that the town has also had a very active and beloved community choir for 26 years. And this year, the choir

has its biggest number of members: 85, ranging from ages 14 to 82.

Members come from 11 different towns and hamlets, including as far away as Ottawa and Eganville.

This homegrown choir has evolved from a Continuing Education night course at the Arnprior District High School in the fall of 1991. The "choir" class was among such courses as bridge, watercolours and sewing. Its first-year enrolment was small: only 15 people. Lisa Webber had been approached to teach this course by individuals who wanted to set up a community choir.

And she had all the prerequisites: a bachelor of music/bachelor of education degree from the University of Lethbridge, specializing in elementary, intermediate and senior choral music; and a master of music in vocal performance from the University of Ottawa.

Before long, the word reached choral singers in Arnprior and the Ottawa Valley that there was now an "official" community choir. The number of registrants doubled to 30 the following January (1992), requiring a move to another school for rehearsals and to 40 the next September. Within a year, the choir was firmly established.

In its first year, the choir performed throughout the community, at nursing homes and for Remembrance Day ceremonies.

Well-attended (and eventually sold-out) "ticketed" concerts began in 1992, with two held each year, one for Christmas and one the following spring, the spring concert alternating between classical and pop music.



Submitted
This year, the Arnprior Community Choir has its biggest number of members: 85, ranging from ages 14 to 82. Members come from 11 different towns and hamlets, including as far away as Ottawa and Eganville.

ACC has always given back to the community, through fundraising concerts and singalongs at numerous organizations and seniors' homes. Lisa's philosophy is: "... someone calls or asks, and we'll sing!" The choir has sung in Arnprior and in outlying areas such as Almonte, White Lake, Pakenham, Kanata, Nepean and Renfrew.

The choir has also participated in and supported the Renfrew Music Festival and the Ottawa Valley Music Festival. In addition, the choir gives a substantial scholarship each year to a graduating student at Arnprior District High School who has been involved in vocal music at the high school level and is going on to university studies.

Considering the latest statistics that show that more people in Canada sing in a choir than play hockey (shocking!), the ACC can easily expect to continue to grow and to provide beautiful choral music for years to come.

Visit www.arnpriorcommunitychoir.com for details on the choir's upcoming concerts.

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