

CitySongs Notes

Spring Newsletter 2005, Vol. 12

Celebrating Our Vibrant Community!

by Sarah Overly Johansen

Acting Executive Director and Social Work/Education Director

The Dalai Lama said "In a sense the concept of us and them is almost no longer relevant, as our neighbors' interests are ours as well. Caring for our neighbors' interests is essentially caring for our own future."

At CitySongs, caring for our neighbors and taking steps to improve our community is fundamental to who we are and what our program is about. It is reflected in our repertoire, all of our program activities, and the commitment that we have made to spreading the message of peace and unity throughout the Twin Cities, and even the state.

This year, the theme of our Spring Concert is "*Celebrating our Vibrant Community*." In preparation for the performance on May 14th, we are doing a "Neighborhood Tour" and spending lots of time learning about the many communities that are represented both in our CitySongs group as well as throughout St. Paul. In rehearsals we are sharing with one another the experiences of our communities. In our dances, we will feature many styles, within a multicultural medley. It's been fun to watch as our students learn more about their neighborhoods and develop a deeper understanding for the power of community and diversity. Our Neighborhood Tour promises to bring us to friends both near and far, young and old, building new relationships and celebrating longstanding partnerships. Once again this year, we will bring our music to Lyngblomsten Senior Center. We also plan to visit Liberty Plaza—a housing community just two blocks from Rondo. Liberty Plaza is home to people from many different nations and we are excited to share music and conversation as we build bridges and make new friends. Our neighborhood tour will also bring us back together with the students from the St. Paul Talmud Torah. This will be our 7th year performing together. We truly value our ongoing collaboration with the Talmud Torah, it's always an enriching learning experience for everyone involved.

Our spring concert is really going to be a great show. It's on a Saturday afternoon this year—in the completely renovated Jean D'Arc auditorium at the College of St. Catherine. We really hope to joyfully cap off our Celebration with a HUGE audience of CitySongs supporters and community members. **Save the Date Now – May 14th!!** Plan to bring your family, your friends, your neighbors and anyone else who could use the inspiration of music (really, who couldn't?) After all, "*Celebrating our Vibrant Community*" also means celebrating each of YOU—who support us every day!

Finally, I cannot end the year without a million **Thank-yous!** This has been a big year for the CitySongs program and our success is attributable to so many. We've had a great team of committed volunteers who have put up with so much—and given even more—to each of the students. Our Board has charted new territory—and worked hard along the way. To all of our supporters, thank you—your generosity has truly made a difference. To the CitySongs kids and families, YOU are why we are here—and each of you make such an impact on our program. Thank you for the tremendous commitment you have made this year. And the staff, what an amazing team! Our program is lucky to have such a group of dedicated, brilliant, caring women! Thank you Cathy, Heather, Alli and Margaret for all that you have done! In June, we bid Best Wishes to Margaret, after pulling her out of retirement once, we can not keep her away from it forever. Margaret has big plans and although we will miss her—we are grateful for the time she has given us. Thank you Ms. LaFleur for your leadership, your voice, and your commitment to kids. You're an inspiration to us all!



A Tribute to Ms. Margaret LaFleur



Margaret LaFleur is an incredible musician, an inspiring teacher, and a phenomenal woman. As the Music Director of CitySongs, Margaret has brought the group to a new level of performance quality. She encourages each student to find the courage to sing out- as part of the group as well as within solo performances. She immediately endured the challenges of transition and moved forward- always putting the students first. Margaret has served as a mentor and friend to all staff, coached volunteers, and contributed great wisdom to the CitySongs program. She has a smile on her face at every rehearsal and performance, and behind that smile is a strong, but gentle voice that inspires and encourages every student to shine in their own unique way.

As a community member, Margaret shares her passion for music with her church, the Leigh Morris Choral, and many others who ask. She is committed to her community, active in civic groups, and a devoted mother and grandmother. There are so many kind and admirable things that we can and should share about Ms. LaFleur- after all, she has been active with CitySongs since 1992!

We will deeply miss having Margaret as an active part of the CitySongs staff. We hope not to let her get too far away! Most of all, we rest assured knowing that whatever Margaret has up her sleeve will not be a typical "retirement" life. She moves faster than the rest of the staff put together!

Margaret, you will always be an important part of the CitySongs family and your impact on the program will be everlasting. We all wish you many fabulous adventures to come.



Quotes about Margaret LaFleur from the CitySongs Community:

"Working with Margaret has been an incredible opportunity to learn about professionalism and music pedagogy. Her "cool" under pressure never ceases to amaze me. Moreover, Margaret's teaching style creatively ties musical performance to everyday life situations, making learning about music relevant to many of the life skills CitySongs choir members will need to thrive."

Alli Adrian, Staff Member

"With Ms. LaFleur, more people are getting solos." Parent

"Ms. LaFleur was helpful with working on my child's solo every step of the way." Parent

"It's fun to see how well all kids can do if given the opportunity and support." Parent



"Ms. LaFleur helped me if I messed up with the pitches and stuff." Student

"Ms. LaFleur helped me be loud and clear." Student

"Ms. LaFleur helped by writing words and going over them." Student

"Her own extraordinarily lovely voice and rich set of life experiences have allowed her personal compassion for and commitment to children to shine through her work with us. When she brings in a guest artist, arranges a collaborative performance, or introduces a new piece of repertoire, she engages enough of herself that the experience becomes, for all of us, one of learning, and one of mutuality with a beloved adult. Margaret LaFleur, we are so grateful to have been able to work with you these past 2 1/2 years! We wish you all success in your second attempt at retirement!" Helen Kivnick Founder/Executive Director



From our Music Director

by Margaret LaFleur

As I approach CitySong's May 14th, 2005 Spring Concert, I am reminded of how fast the time passes. It is hard to believe that I began my tenure with CitySongs in January of 2003, as a 6-month replacement for the previous music director. The six months have grown into two years and six months. It has been a great adventure with this notable organization. I have experienced wonderful and talented choir members, generous volunteers, fantastic staff members, dynamic board members, trusting and supportive parents, Minnesota communities, and the dedicated and dynamic founder and executive director of CitySongs, my friend, Dr. Helen Q. Kivnick.

Helen was on sabbatical during this school year, and CitySongs flourished under the leadership of our acting executive director/social work educator, Sarah Overly Johansen. Sarah's ability to facilitate the goals of CitySongs, while managing her many leadership roles, was enhanced by her team building and communication skills. I offer special thanks to, Sarah, Cathy Bouggy, operations

manager, Alli Adrian, rehearsal assistant, and Heather Johnson, social work intern for all of the support that I have received this year as music director of CitySongs. The CitySongs choir members who have stayed with the program since January 2003, as well as the members who have joined the team as recent as March 2005, will always have a special place in my heart. Their love of singing, dancing, speaking, and growing in peaceful ways is to be highly regarded. Their commitment to CitySongs is phenomenal and I am so proud to have been a part of their lives.

Therefore, it is with these happy memories, love, and sad feelings, that I will resign my position with CitySongs as the music director at the end of June 2005. My goal is to "retire again" in order to pursue my personal goals. I will always support the goals and work of CitySongs. May this program continue to enrich the lives of our children!

Ethnomusicology and CitySongs

by Alli Adrian, Rehearsal and Program Assistant

When I was presented with the opportunity to learn the piano in kindergarten, my life changed. It was not an instantaneous transformation, but one that I willed to happen through conscious decisions and with the help of many individuals who saw potential in me. Having always been fascinated by the way that people use music, I eventually pursued a graduate degree in ethnomusicology: the study of music and culture. I initially thought that I would study music in places far from my native state of Minnesota. But as I researched the musics of the world, I became increasingly engrossed in the musical cultures of the United States, particularly those that have flourished in the Twin Cities.

My interests, experiences, and abilities coalesced when an opportunity to join the staff of CitySongs arose in the summer of 2004. As a staff-member at CitySongs I am able to rather uniquely combine my interests in social justice and the arts. Music provides a vital social space where youth may voice frustration and dissent about the inequities of the world and envision possible solutions to problems they face. My experiences as part of CitySongs have enhanced my understanding of music as a positive force in young peoples' lives and perhaps more explicitly, demonstrated the powerful role that music can play in relaying messages, recognizing similarities, honoring differences and building community.

Through CitySongs, I solidify my role as part of the vast web of musical knowledge and ability that spans our cities. Furthermore, I am presented with opportunities to endorse the creation of a musical community whose strengths are dependent on the successful negotiation of different cultural backgrounds and life experiences. I apply the ethnomusicology that I learn about in the classroom to real-life situations and also gain hands-on experience with musical situations unavailable in academia. Most importantly, I am able to encourage cross-cultural understanding through music and promote the life-changing opportunities music presents to youth.



No gift is too small!

A gift to CitySongs is invaluable to the potential of young people. Every dollar has a direct impact on our program. As one of our song intros states, "Each one of us may be little. But each one of us is big enough to help someone else. And working together we can make big progress toward making things right for all of us." Think about it! We thank you in advance for your generous contribution.

Make your tax-deductible gift payable to:

Checks: CitySongs, 105 Peters Hall, 1404 Gortner Ave., St. Paul, MN 55108

Credit Card: If you want to make an online donation by credit card, go to <http://citysongs.umn.edu/Giving.html>

CitySongs

c/o University of Minnesota
School of Social Work
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1404 Gortner Ave.
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Upcoming Performances:

If you would like to book CitySongs or know of a venue or event that would be a good fit for CitySongs, please contact Cathy Bouggy at 612-626-1241 or cbouggy@che.umn.edu

April 15th, 5:30PM

Midwest Association for the Education of Young Children Conference

Minneapolis Convention Center
1301 Second Ave. South, Minneapolis, MN

April 24th, 3:00PM

Metropolitan Boy Choir

Orchestra Hall, 1111 Nicollet Ave., Minneapolis, MN

April 26th 6:45PM

Lyngblomsten Senior Center

1415 Almond Ave., St. Paul, MN

April 28th, 5:00PM

Liberty Plaza Community Center

415 Marshall Ave., St. Paul, MN

May 14th, 4:30PM

13th Annual CitySongs Spring Concert “Celebrating Our Vibrant Community”

College of St. Catherine, Jeanne d'Arc Auditorium
2004 Randolph Ave., St. Paul, MN

May 15th, 3:00PM

Alpha Kappa Alpha 5A Leadership Event

Central High School, 275 North Lexington Pkwy., St. Paul, MN

May 26th*, 7:00PM

Concert with the Talmud Torah

St. Paul Auditorium, 768 Hamline Ave. S., St. Paul, MN

***Tentative Date – Check website to confirm**

Please note: For a complete listing of our performances.

Visit our web site at <http://citysongs.umn.edu>

CitySongs is a joint project of

The University of Minnesota School
of Social Work, College of Human
Ecology,



Hallie Q. Brown-Martin Luther King Center, and Rondo Education Center.

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