

Handbell Choir Rings in New Musical Adventures

Auditions will be held Aug. 20 and Aug. 30 to select members of the Village Ringers.

By KRISTEN FIORE
Daily Sun Senior Staff Writer

It's said that if you move to The Villages and can't find the activity you want to do, just create it yourself.

That's exactly what Village of Glenbrook resident Bonnie Fisher is doing.

Before settling in The Villages, Fisher worked as a church musician for more than 15 years, playing the organ and directing choirs and handbell choirs.

She fell in love with the handbells, which must be played by a team in which every player is equally important.

But Fisher couldn't find a handbell organization in The Villages, and it became her dream to change that.

Now her dream is coming true.

Fisher knew it would be hard to get a handbell choir up and running, because handbells are expensive and need a place to be stored, but she put the word out anyway.

A generous couple anonymously donated all of the money Fisher needed to purchase the handbells. But in order to accept the donation, Fisher had to make the handbell choir, dubbed the Village Ringers, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

After a long application process, she was able to make the group a nonprofit organization and register as a resident lifestyle club with The Villages Recreation and Parks Department.

But no recreation center or church could store all of the handbells, so Fisher and her appointed board members were able to make



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Bonnie Fisher, of the Village of Glenbrook, is starting a handbell choir, The Village Ringers.

an arrangement to rehearse at Élan Buena Vista, an independent living, assisted living and memory care center in The Villages.

"We think it will be a great arrangement, and we're really excited about being there," Fisher said. "We'll be rehearsing on the independent living side, but anyone can come and listen and watch us rehearse."

But before any rehearsals can take place, the choir must assemble.

Fisher wants the choir to have 15 members, and she has a list of more than 20 people planning to audition.

Anyone with intermediate to advanced handbell capabilities is welcome to audition.

Fisher said she and the judges will be looking for people who are confident in sight-reading, as well as their handbell-playing skills and technique.

"These instruments are something that any age can do, but they're extremely challenging," Fisher said. "I think we'll find some of the best musicians in The Villages auditioning for this, because it's very difficult and takes a huge commitment."

Auditions will take place at 3 p.m. Aug. 20 and 6 p.m. Aug. 30 at New Covenant United Methodist Church, 3470 Woodridge Drive. To sign up for auditions or find out more, email Fisher at bonniefisher53@gmail.com.

Fisher said she hopes the handbell choir is able to grow enough to eventually hold monthly workshops for people who want to learn to play the handbells.

"Our goal is to introduce people of The Villages to a new musical experience that they've never heard before," she said. "We want people to get excited and interested in learning themselves."

The Village Ringers are scheduled to perform their first show at 7 p.m. Dec. 8 at SeaBreeze Recreation Center.

The organization is accepting donations to help purchase sheet music and pay for other expenses. Those who would like to make a tax-deductible donation can email Fisher.

Kristen Fiore is a senior staff writer with The Villages Daily Sun. She can be reached at 352-753-1119, ext. 5270, or kristen.fiore@thevillagesmedia.com.