



Learning to Play Handbells Has a Nice Ring to it

The Village Ringers are forming two more groups to bring in beginners and more seasoned players.

By **MICHAEL FORTUNA**
Daily Sun Staff Writer

Like the resonating tone the handbell makes after being rung, The Village Ringers plans to expand past its current iteration.

One of the missions of the resident handbell group, led by Bonnie Fisher, is to introduce people to playing handbells. Usually after every concert, the group invites the audience to come up and try out ringing a bell, or they ask any questions they may have.

"They usually pick up the heaviest one," said Fisher, of the Village of Polo Ridge.

Now the Ringers have created two offshoot groups to help people become more immersed in playing the handbells.

"It's different when you're behind the table," Ringer member Lana McKinzie said. "When you're out front, you get a whole sense of the piece."

Village Ringers, Too, which will be led by Cathy Ferrand Bullock, is a group for intermediate players who can serve as substitutes for the Ringers.

It started meeting this week from 3 to 4:15 p.m. Mondays at New Covenant United



I couldn't wait to get my hands on the bells. My mom was a charter member of the bell choir. That was a fun way to start."

CATHY FERRAND BULLOCK

Village of St. Catherine

Methodist Church.

"Bonnie asked, and I jumped up," said Bullock, of the Village of St. Catherine. "We're making more good music together. It's more ringing time."

The music for handbell choirs are labeled between levels 1 and 6, with Level 6 being the most difficult. This group is designed for people who can play at Level 2 or above.

"The goals are to have fun and make some great music together," Bullock said. "It's giving people to gain more experience."

Fisher hopes to bring this group in to play at concerts.



Lana McKinzie, from left, Cathy Ferrand Bullock, and Bonnie Fisher are each leading three groups of handbell ringers for the Village Ringers. One group will be focused on the basics of the instrument, while the other is geared for more intermediate players who can serve as substitutes for the main group.

Michael Fortuna,
Daily Sun

Bullock, who also serves as a substitute when Fisher can't make it to rehearsals, has been playing the handbells off and on since the 1980s, playing continuously since 2001.

"I couldn't wait to get my hands on the bells," Bullock said. "My mom was a charter member of the bell choir. That was a fun way to start."

She also led a group in northern Utah in 2008. Bullock currently plays at First Presbyterian Church in Leesburg.

"I like the music," Bullock said. "I like the cooperative spirit. You're depending on the people around you."

The next offshoot, Village Ringers, Inspiration, is a beginner class designed for those who have never played before and want to learn the basics.

McKinzie will lead the 12-week class from 11 a.m. to noon Wednesdays at St. George Episcopal Church starting March 12.

"If you have any curiosity, this is the way to do it," said McKinzie, of the Village of Polo Ridge. "It's fun to teach people. They get to ring bells. It's like they're in on a secret."

"If they want to do more, maybe they'll join a church

group or Cathy's group, if they're serious about it," McKinzie said. "Or they want to learn to better appreciate us."

McKinzie has been a part of handbell choirs for 35 years, with 30 of those directing groups "by accident," she said. She currently directs the bell choir at St. George.

"I love ringing," McKinzie said. "It's good exercise. I love

physical activity, I love the music."

To let Fisher know if you are interested in either group, email her at bonniefisher53@gmail.com or text her at 614-565-0953.

Staff writer Michael Fortuna can be reached at 352-753-1119, ext. 5273, or michael.fortuna@thevillagesmedia.com.