



Singing Hills  
Chorus



giving voice chorus

## Building a Dementia-Friendly Chorus

ACTION COMMUNITIES LEARNING SUMMIT  
OCTOBER 24, 2017

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*Giving Voice Initiative inspires and equips organizations to bring together people with Alzheimer's and their care partners to sing in choruses that foster joy, well-being, purpose and community understanding.*



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Chorus



giving voice chorus

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## Music and Dementia Research

- For many people, areas of the brain involved with music activity and memories of music, lyrics, and associated emotions seem to be preserved from the progression of AD well into the late stages of the disease.
- In 2013 - randomized control trial at the University of Helsinki studied benefits of music leisure activities for people in early dementia & their caregivers
  - Regular singing or music listening can support cognitive functioning (attention and executive functioning, orientation, episodic memory) and alleviate depressed mood in people with dementia.
  - Singing can also be beneficial for the verbal working memory of the people with dementia and for the psychological well-being of their caregivers.
  - Some of these benefits lasted 6 months.

Storvik et al., 2014; Kelly et al., 2015; International Journal of Clinical Gerontology  
Wolkstein & Cooley (2009), Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences  
by the author(s)




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## Design of a Chorus for those with Alzheimer's/Dementia

- Community choir designed for those with dementia and care partners who are living in their homes or chosen community
- No singing experience required
- Weekly rehearsals – morning, accessible and acoustic positive space
- Public performance – provides goal, purpose and a forum
- Specially trained music director
- Wide music selection - familiar & challenging, adapted as needed; i.e. personalized music books & practice CDs
- Social time for singers and care partners – must include food!
- Dementia-friendly trained volunteers to assist




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### Sandi Lubrant PROGRAM DIRECTOR – SINGING HILLS CHORUS

Sandi is the team lead of the Mankato & North Mankato ACT on Alzheimer's Action Team. She is a graduate of Mankato State University. She serves on three Alzheimer's Association MN-ND Chapter committees and on the Board of Directors with the Minnesota Elder Justice Center.

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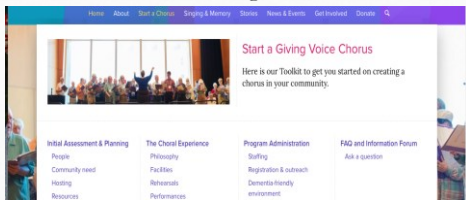
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## Overview: Giving Voice Toolkit




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### Singing Hills Chorus Experience

- How did the Giving Voice Toolkit serve as a guide?
- Did you depart from the Toolkit? Why?
- What is a key take-away from the Toolkit?



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### Assess Your Community

- Get the right people on board
- Measure community need/interest
- Identify the right host organization
- Evaluate available resources
- Plan the chorus program



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### Community Response to Singing Hills

- How did the community respond to the program?
- Who is driving the bus?
- What were the important pieces in marketing Singing Hills?
- How did you create awareness? What would you do differently?



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### Consider program/staffing needs

Position	Paid or Volunteer
Music Director	Paid preferred – 4-6 hours per week
Accompanist	Paid preferred 4-6 hours per week
Program Administrator	Paid or volunteer – 10 hours per week
Administrative Assistant	Paid or volunteer- 5 hours per week
Volunteer Coordinator	Volunteer – 4-6 hours per week

- Volunteer roles:
  - Singer/helper: Dementia Friend
  - Operations – marketing, production
  - Hospitality – Weekly food and connection
- **Singing Hills Example:**

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### Finances & Fundraising

- \* Expect \$25-35,000 of costs in year 1
- \* Seek a balance of donations, earned revenue and in-kind support
- \* Sources of funding: community foundations

#### Singing Hills Experience:

- \* Cost per singer...
- \* Snacks/Scarves




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### Key Lessons



- Preview a GVC Rehearsal
- MUSIC
- Push and Pause throughout
- Dementia-friendly training for volunteers
- Community Conversations

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In here we are all singers!



- There is no wrong in this room!
- Make it easy for people to contribute to the chorus
- Take lots of pictures

[givingvoicechorus.org/start-chorus/](http://givingvoicechorus.org/start-chorus/)

**“Love Never Forgets”**  
- Singer with Alzheimer's

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**GVI Inspired Choruses**

- Mankato, MN
- Granite Falls, MN
- Winona, MN
- Medina, OH
- Eau Claire, WI
- Canberra, Australia
- La Crosse, WI
- Victoria, British Columbia
- Vancouver, British Columbia
- West Des Moines, IA
- Chicago, IL
- Poughkeepsic, NY
- Arlington, TX
- Houston, TX
- Mechanicsburg, VA
- Manassas, VA

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**Singing Hills Chorus**

**Questions & Answers**

**“The only thing better than singing is more singing.”**  
- ELLA FITZGERALD

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