

CVHS concert fundraises for autism cause

- By Nicole Tuttle For MediaNews Group



The (Mostly) A Cappella for Autism concert will be held on April 17 at Chippewa Valley High School. The concert will feature several of the high school's choirs. It will raise funds for Play-Place Autism and Special Needs Center as well as Chippewa Valley vocal music.

PHOTO COURTESY OF JAMES PECAR



On April 17, the Chippewa Valley High School choral department will present (Mostly) A Cappella for Autism. The concert features five different choirs from the high school, student quartets and middle school student performances.

PHOTO COURTESY OF JAMES PECAR

NICOLE TUTTLE FOR THE MACOMB DAILY

Funds raised through a Chippewa Valley High School choir concert April 17 will benefit autism and vocal music, but choir students in middle and high school will gain an important benefit as well: A sense of collaboration and tradition.

Middle and high school students in the Chippewa Valley district will participate in the (Mostly) A Cappella for Autism concert in the Clinton Township school's Henrichsen Auditorium, with a fishbowl raffle beginning at 6 p.m. and the concert at 7 p.m.

"Many of these students will be coming to CVHS for high school," Choir Director James Pecar said of the middle school students. "We love to collaborate with these students and know they love being part of this tradition."

Several different choirs from the high school, located at 19 Mile Road west of Romeo Plank Road, will participate in the concert. These will include the Treble Choir, Men's Choir, Choraliers, Chorale, Voices of the Valley and student run quartets. Special guest vocalists will include seventh and eighth grade students from Algonquin and Wyandot middle schools, both located in Clinton Township. One guest performance will be a graduate of the Macomb Intermediate School District singing a solo. A total of between 20 and 25 songs will be performed by about 10 choirs, or almost 400 singers.

“Our students are preparing a wide range of repertoire for this concert,” Pecar said. “We are excited to share some really fun new music.”

One song that will be included is Joan Szymko’s “It Takes a Village,” which the choirs use as an anthem for autism.

“This song amplifies the idea that we all contribute to the growth of everyone around us,” Pecar said. “Additionally, working together on this project takes a village and we all use our voices to contribute to that goal.”

Tickets can be purchased at cvchoirs.seatyourself.biz or at the door at a cost of \$10 per person. Pecar said that as the concert historically sells out, ticket purchasers are encouraged to utilize the online option. Online ticket sales close 12 hours prior to the concert. The concert will also feature a “miracle minute” in which students run through the crowd to see how many donations they can collect in 60 seconds.

Funds raised will benefit Play-Place Autism and Special Needs Center, and Chippewa Valley vocal music. The goal this year is to raise about \$10,000.

“Teaching students to be part of something greater than themselves is something in which I firmly believe. Philanthropy, teamwork and character are some of the most important parts of being in a vocal ensemble,” Pecar said. “This allows us to magnify that for students to give them a more tangible idea of what that is and what they can do.”

Play-Place is a non-profit organization. Its mission is to provide a fun and judgement-free haven for families affected by autism and other special needs. It offers a play-powered environment that combines education and recreation with a variety of social, occupational and physical therapeutic overtones. It serves multiple ages by providing professional support services and respite for parents and siblings, as well as cognitive and social development, sensory integration, balance and coordination to autistic and special needs kids.

“Play-Place Autism and Special Needs Center is a wonderful group. I have had the opportunity to tour their facility and see what they offer, and it is inspirational. We are excited to do what we can to help them with their mission,” Pecar said.

Play-Place is currently located on Technology Park Drive at 18 Mile Road west of Mound Road in Sterling Heights but closed on March 4 as it is in the process of moving to a new location at 39337 Mound Road in Sterling Heights. A grand re-opening is planned for June 1.