



LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

## Finding our Talented New Children

I am in a second-grade classroom in Chester, on my annual search for the 15 children who will become our new Training Chorus.

"I'd like to play a game with you," I say to the children. "Everyone stand up." Big smiles. "Let's shake," I say, and 25 bodies do the Harlem Shake. Suddenly, I call, "Attention." The children are instantly still, then burst out laughing. Wonderful! We can play together, which is what we need to do before we can sing together.

This is one of the 27 second-grade Chester classrooms I visit each year, and in every one I am amazed and inspired by the joy, exuberance, and innocence of these tiny children—and their talent! As I write this, I have completed half of

this year's visits and have already found 40 children who would be superb additions to the chorus.

Now I start a call and response game. I clap four times, the children clap back. I add some Latin and hip-hop rhythms. There are grins of recognition. One child says, "You're funny." I make a goofy face. "You're funny, too."

The next game is "I sing, you sing back." Some children are excited, others bewildered, a few unenthusiastic. I tell them there are some really good singers in this class, and we've only got a few minutes to find each other, so those who enjoy our singing games should continue to stand. It's okay for the others to sit down. A couple of children sit. The rest are ready.



Director John Alston plays musical games with second-graders at St. Katharine Drexel School in his search for new chorus members.

Now I start tapping my foot and beating my chest. "My job is to give us some groove, your job is to sing back." I sing a simple figure for them to repeat after me. It's rough at first but quickly becomes beautiful. I ask who wants to sing with me by themselves; the children whose hands shoot up are those who really love to sing. Fifteen raise their

*(continued, over)*

## Chorus Gets \$50K Grant To Add Children, Make CD

In January the chorus received the largest grant in its history: \$50,500 from the U.S. Department of Education. Of the funds, \$33,000 will be used during the next 3 years to help support expansion of the chorus by at least 25 percent, and \$17,500 is earmarked to cover the cost of recording our first CD this summer. The grant was made possible through the efforts of Chester Mayor Wendell Butler Jr. and U.S. Sen. Rick Santorum, who have our great thanks.

This summer, we will add 15 new children to bring chorus membership to 75. "Bringing more children into the chorus is the most important thing we do, and it's wonderful to have this grant to help us do it," director John Alston said. He noted that the chorus is seeking funding in addition to this grant to cover the full costs of the expansion.

Chorus members are already excited about the CD project, which will bring a recording engineer to Lang Music Building this summer to record 10 gospel numbers that Alston wrote especially for the children. "We're recording gospel

### Chester Quakers Host Chorus Rehearsals



Monday and Tuesday afternoon rehearsals for our two training choruses have moved from Swarthmore College to the Chester Friends Meetinghouse at 24th and Chestnut Streets. This change reduces travel time for our youngest children, who are 8 and 9 years old. The meetinghouse provides a quiet rehearsal space and a large, off-street area where the children can play safely before and after rehearsals – as these members of the New Training Chorus are preparing to do. Our thanks to Chester Friends Meeting! Shown are Tajah Johns-Jennings, Naphtali Jacobs, Da'Shon Toler, Jimmy Jones, Vincente Saldana, Kaya Banton, and Janoah Wright.

because the children love to sing these songs and because they express a central teaching of our program, which is that we must all love each other and take care of each other," Alston said.

Other organizations whose lead gifts have helped sustain the chorus program are First Keystone Bank; the Elsie Lee Garthwaite Memorial Foundation; the Hamilton Family Foundation; Independence Foundation; the Philadelphia Foundation; the Presser Foundation; the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts; and the Ethel Sergeant Clark Smith Memorial Foundation.

### Come to Our Spring Concert!



**Sat., May 13, 8 p.m.**  
**Lang Performing Arts Center,**  
**Swarthmore College**

*Admission free—Community invited*

**To make a tax-deductible contribution, please detach this coupon, complete, and mail to the following address:**

Chester Children's Chorus, Swarthmore College, Department of Music and Dance, 500 College Avenue, Swarthmore PA 19081

Enclosed is a check in the amount of  \$35  \$75  \$100  \$250  \$500  \$1,000  Other: \_\_\_\_\_.

(Check should be payable to Swarthmore College with Chester Children's Chorus in memo field)

Please charge my gift to my:

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My gift will be matched by my employer.

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**THANK YOU!**

## ... New Children

(continued)

hands, and I invite them to the front of the room.

The children are excited and nervous. We talk about not wanting to hurt anyone's feelings. Instead, I suggest, "You need to think of the person singing, wish that they do well, and cheer them when they're done." We hook pinky fingers in a promise to support each other.

Then, something completely unexpected happens. Entirely unprompted, the children begin to hold hands. They are keeping their promise, encouraging and congratulating each other. I am moved beyond words.

Four of these children will be invited to join the chorus. But we know from experience that most families who receive invitations won't enroll their children, and if they did, we couldn't take them all. I leave the school buoyed by the children and sad that we can't scoop all of them under our wings—but hopeful that one or two will find their way to us and sing with us for a long time.

—John Alston



Reading volunteer Betty Ann Wilson and chorister Richard Hill read together last summer. Volunteers don't have to sit on steps! There are chairs and tables, too.

## Come Read with a Child this Summer

Director John Alston describes our summer reading hour as "the most beautiful part of our summer day." It begins at 1 p.m. in a swirl of noise and energy, as the children run out into the lobby to meet their volunteers and choose books. Soon an hour-long hush descends, as each child settles down with an adult reading buddy somewhere in Lang Music Building.

We will need 40 adult volunteers this summer to help make the hush happen—and to help eager children 8 to 10 years old maintain or improve their reading



## What's New?

### Chester School of the Arts Moves Ahead

Planning a future academic and arts school in Chester is exhausting but inspirational work. In January, John Alston and Wendy Emrich, managing director of the school initiative, revisited the Central Park East schools in Harlem to learn more about the child-centered teaching that produces enthusiastic scholars in urban public schools. They spent the day with Deborah Meier, the schools' internationally-known founder, who will continue to advise us on pedagogy and curriculum for our school.

We welcomed new board members Charles Gray and Eric Kraeutler in Febru-

ary. Charles chaired the Chester Education Foundation for more than a decade and is former director of the Pennsylvania Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. Eric is a partner in the Philadelphia law firm of Morgan, Lewis & Bockius and a former assistant U.S. attorney.

We are heartened that generous donors have contributed or pledged \$285,000 toward our goal of \$500,000 to fund our development efforts. We plan to open the school in 2008 with grades K-2, adding one grade each year. Stay tuned for more news as the school unfolds over the months and years ahead!

### College Kids Teach Chorus Kids Science



The summer Science for Kids program has been extended through the school year thanks to Simone Boyle '07, who leads science workshops for nine chorus members on Saturday afternoons. Simone, shown here helping chorister Asr McCready with a microscope, taught biology to the children last summer as an intern under Associate Professor of Biology Elizabeth Vallen, and enjoyed it so much she planned the school year lessons. In the project shown here, the children collected soil samples, made slides of them, and used microscopes to examine samples for bacteria. Participating chorus members are 10 to 13 years old. College students working with Simone are Zoe Bridges-Curry '09, Ethan Deyle '08, Keefe Keeley '06, Callie Plafkin '09, Emma Schroeder '06, Matthew Tom '07, and Ian Yarett '09.

### Chorus Provides Piano Lessons for Five Members



Ja'Quay Lundy, 10, is one of five Concert Choir members selected for piano lessons this year on the basis of musical readiness and commitment to the chorus program. John Alston is teaching Ja'Quay; Jenniffer Foster, 12; and Craig Robinson, 15. Sara Posey '04, who has taught music in our Summer Learning Program for the past three years, is giving piano lessons to Asia Cherry, 10, and Jazmin Sarinana, 10.

skills. Each volunteer reads with one child, and we give preference to men and women who can come regularly for 3 to 5 weeks in order to build a bond of trust and shared experiences with a child.

The reading hour runs from 1 p.m. to 2 p.m. Reading days are Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday from June 26 through July 27, and Thursdays June 29, July 6, and July 27. For more information, contact the chorus office at (610) 328-8180 or [ccc@swarthmore.edu](mailto:ccc@swarthmore.edu), or visit [www.chesterchildrenschorus.org](http://www.chesterchildrenschorus.org) and click on "You Can Help!"

## CHESTER CHILDREN'S CHORUS

John Alston, *founder and director*  
Andrea Knox '64, *managing director*

**Advisory Board**  
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