

Pikesville High and Reisterstown Senior Center

By Sue Heiderman



The partnership between the Pikesville High School Concert Choir and the Reisterstown Senior Center began in 1989. It was formed in response to a need to provide an organized choral experience for senior citizens in an effort to provide meaningful and engaging activities for seniors. The Center hired a music teacher who met with citizens once each week to rehearse music selected by Dr. Disharoon as appropriate for the high school students and the senior citizens. The Intergenerational Chorus performs concerts at the school and the center. The chorus has also performed community concerts and for a Baltimore County Showcase of activities.

Meet a recognized community need: The project recognized the desire of the senior citizens at the Center to perform and be out in the community and interacting with young people.

Achieve curricular objectives: This service-learning activity provided the high school students with expanded opportunities to demonstrate their ability to perceive, perform, and respond to music (MD. Essential Learner Outcome I). The Intergenerational Chorus sings choral literature representative of the senior citizen generation and the student generation. This provides an opportunity for the students to understand music as an essential aspect of history and human experience (MD. Essential Learner Outcome II). The Baltimore County curricular goal of experiencing a variety of musical activities to foster the pursuit of life-long musical interests is also attained through this activity. As a result of the Intergenerational Chorus experience, the senior citizens have formed an independent group called the "Reisterstown Senior Songbirds." The group performs numerous concerts on their own throughout the year.

Reflect through the service-learning experience: Students submitted a summary reflection of the Intergenerational Chorus activities (rehearsals/concerts) at the end of the school year. They are encouraged to keep a running diary throughout the year as an aid to completing the reflection.

Develop student responsibility: The first step in establishing student responsibility was to engage them in an interactive experience with the senior citizens. After observing the enthusiasm of the seniors and the joy the activity brought to them, the students and I discussed their role in this partnership. They decided that their main role was to help the seniors follow the music and to provide encouragement. We discussed how to accomplish this. For example, students learned that they could keep the seniors "on track" by pointing to the place in the music we were rehearsing. While working on choreography, students would help seniors with the steps, turning the right way, etc.

Establish community partnerships: The partnerships were established through the combined efforts of the high school music teacher and the activity director at the senior center.

Plan ahead for service-learning: See above. The project takes significant planning and coordinator to bring the two groups together.

Equip students with knowledge and skills needed for service: Students were equipped for the knowledge and skills they needed through their work in the choral performance course, which they take for credit.