



Woodstock Community Unit School District 200

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Contact: Kevin Lyons

815.337.3071

Woodstock North Parent Choir hits the right notes

While leading the Woodstock High School choir for many years, Paul Rausch hoped to one day expand the joy of music and singing beyond the classroom, but coaching obligations made it difficult to find the time.

The retired, legendary music educator took that opportunity this school year as he filled in at Woodstock North High School for a teacher on leave by launching a parent/adult choir now rehearsing for a May 2 Broadway-themed concert.

Among the 34 choir members are lawyers, teachers, business owners and grandparents, some of whom are supporting their children's passion and some fulfilling their own.

"Many of the members of this choir sang in high school, college or in church choirs in the past and want to experience that again. In fact, there are nine of my former students in this choir," Rausch said. "There are others for whom this is their first choral experience and they are surprised it is as fun as it is."

Lisa Hillstrom's daughter, Kai Roberts, is one of Rausch's top choir students this year. She received a parent email announcing this new opportunity.

"We discussed it, and she really wanted me to do it," Hillstrom said. "She's been singing her whole life. We're just kind of a musical family."

Roberts, whose father was a frontman for an '80s rock band, said she and her mom are having fun learning from Rausch at evening rehearsals and looking forward to the upcoming concert.

"It means a lot to me since the majority of my life my mom really didn't get to do this kind of stuff since she was really busy working," Roberts said.

"She never got a choral experience like a concert. It's really cool that she gets to have that moment for herself, and we get to go cheer her on for once since she's always been there to cheer us on," Roberts added.

Rausch said his students are thrilled about this choir experiment. “They love that I am doing this and are excited about the concert. It is fun to hear them relay the stories from their parents about the rehearsals. They’re jealous that the parent choir is singing a song they like so much.”

Rausch is enjoying teaching adults the skills, giving them a glimpse of what goes into preparing for a performance and reconnecting them with the power of singing.

“This choir is made up of folks from all walks of life, different economic situations, different political preferences and different educational backgrounds. But during rehearsal, we all work towards a common goal and those aforementioned differences don’t matter or get in the way of the music. It truly is a beautiful thing. Art does that,” he said.

The Music from Broadway concert will be held at 7 p.m. Thursday, May 2 in the Woodstock North High School auditorium.

Rausch said the first part will feature songs from the musicals, State Fair, Mary Poppins, Wicked, Hairspray, Godspell, West Side Story, Promises, Promises, and the parent song, "A Million Dreams" from The Greatest Showman.

The second half of the concert will feature the Varsity Choir singing selections from Les Miserables. There is a \$3 adult and \$2 student/senior citizen admission fee.