

Bellingham Herald

Singers bring peace to ill, dying

Opinion Volunteer View

By: Michele Kammerer April 26, 2016

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Bellingham Threshold Singers was established in 2007 and had about 40 volunteers in 2015.

Purpose: Bellingham Threshold Singers is an all-volunteer organization consisting of about 40 women who go in groups of three or four to offer soothing singing to individuals who are critically ill, struggling to live, or nearing the end of life.

Our mission is to relieve distress, pain, and anxiety with comforting song—to bring ease and peace at life’s thresholds. We have a unique repertoire of soft, lullaby-like songs, which we sing unaccompanied by musical instruments.

We are part of an international network of threshold choirs and are not religiously affiliated. There is never a charge for our service.

We are called by family members and caregivers to sing for people in care facilities, in the hospital, or in their homes in Whatcom County. We currently make more than 50 bedside visits each month. We also honor requests to sing at vigil, funerals and memorial services.

Volunteer highlights: We are honored to be a recipient of the 2016 Mayor’s Award, which recognizes the contribution we make to our community by bringing music into the lives of people at a threshold. Our leadership, dedication, creativity, and artistic excellence were cited by those who nominated us.

Threshold singing is challenging, even for experienced singers. Each group of three or four singers that goes to a bedside may be a new combination of singers. They sing softly in unison, which is very different from performance modes they may have learned previously. They must be prepared to sing any of several dozen songs, sometimes with spontaneous word changes, and they may be sung in any key, with or without harmony. Our singers are trained to create a

serene soundscape that envelopes the client and family even in a chaotic environment. All of our singers are outstanding volunteers.

Signature fundraiser: Art Show Celebration and Fundraiser, May 15, 2016, Studio UFO, 301 W. Holly St, Bellingham.

Wish list: We would like two iPads for our two rehearsal directors to help them with planning and tracking our rehearsal content. Software for choir management would also be helpful. We welcome leads on grants or other funding sources to supplement the donations we receive.

Current volunteer needs: In addition to women singers, we welcome non-singers to serve as volunteers. We can use help with the tasks of running our organization, such as writing, editing, bookkeeping, graphic design, publicity and using software and other technology. We would welcome help making sound recordings, photos and videos.