



Photo submitted

A group of South Metro Chorale singers performed at the group's annual cabaret concert in 2019.

Virtual cabaret show to cap choir's year interrupted

South Metro Chorale video airs March 5-7

by John Gessner
SUN THISWEEK
DAKOTA COUNTY TRIBUNE

Tuesday nights haven't been the same for members of the South Metro Chorale.

The community choir's last live performance was its annual cabaret concert March 7 and 8, 2020, days before Gov. Tim Walz declared the COVID-19 peacetime emergency.

The chorale hasn't met since then, leaving holes in schedules on Tuesday nights when members would have been rehearsing at Twin Oaks Middle School in Prior Lake.

"For a lot of members we learn that it's a lot about making music,

yes, but it's also about the community and kind of the ritual aspect of seeing the same people every Tuesday," said Mark Bilyeu, who has directed the group for three years and was assistant director and accompanist for three years before that.

To partially compensate for a year interrupted, the chorale will present a virtual cabaret concert March 5-7 — a best-of compilation of the showy numbers members have performed in small groups over the years. An annual cabaret concert is the group's main fundraiser, usually held the first weekend in March at the Lakeville Area Arts Center.

Chorale member Suzanne Mills-Rittmann has been an eager participant in the lighthearted concert of show tunes, pop hits and jazz

numbers that depart from the traditional choral canon. She's been part of a trio's choreographed version of "Stop! In the Name of Love" and a slightly larger ensemble's rendering of "Chattanooga Choo Choo" as interpreted by a cappella group the Nylons.

But for the past year, her Tuesday nights haven't been the same.

"Singing in a group like this, some of these people become your best friends," said Mills-Rittmann, of Burnsville, who sang with St. Olaf College's renowned choral program as a student in the 1980s.

"You look forward to participating in the rehearsal once a week. Oftentimes we might go out afterwards and spend more time together. You

See Chorale, 20A

Healthy eating through nature

Burnsville lands grant for food forests, community gardens

by John Gessner
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Imagine a public place where anyone can nibble on something they've just plucked from a tree or shrub.

It's called a "food forest," and it's part of the city of Burnsville's plan to expand healthy eating opportunities.

Underused city park spaces and excess right-of-way next to trails or sidewalks are potential food forest sites, according to City Planner Deb Garross. A forest might have fruit and nut trees, berry shrubs, vines and ground-cover plants such as strawberry.

"It could be next to a trail, just a small place where you could pick apples or berries and, instead of mowing that, have it be used for some sort of food access," said Sue Bast, the city's environmental spe-

See Food, 18A

Eagan, Burnsville visual arts groups join

Hope to be 'stronger together'

by Andy Rogers
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Art Works in Eagan and the Burnsville Visual Arts Society have officially combined forces.

The partnership hopes to provide more opportunities for local artists and their shared communities in 2021 and beyond.

"Basically we're stronger together," said Jerri Neddermeyer, Art Works co-founder. "2020 was a bit of a challenge. We had



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A graphic provided by Art Works recognizing the merged entity.

fewer volunteers, less spaces were open, and we had less energy to expend. We just have to be smarter on how we organize and put

See Arts, 18A

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