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Chorus Still Hits Sweet Note for Members

Milestones are to be celebrated, and this year, the General Motors Chorus, which is based in Macomb County, will be celebrating 80 years of existence.

"Eighty years young and we're still going strong," said Bill Pillar, a GM retiree and first tenor in the chorus.

He said what distinguishes this group of singers is its membership. Over time, the choir has evolved to become more of a community-based group, which still touts its GM heritage.

"I like music and I like to sing, and I really enjoy the people in the chorus," said John Bober, a GM retiree who has been part of the choir for more than 20 years.

"The ensemble is much more like a paternal organization than a music group because there's so much camaraderie between us."

Records show that the chorus was originally formed in 1933 as an employee chorus that primarily performed at GM-sponsored events.

Though the chorus is no longer affiliated with the company, its primary purpose has changed and is now focused on servicing the community with music.

Each year, the chorus gives about 25 concerts at local churches, senior centers, veterans' hospitals and other public venues.

But not only that, because the

choir is focused on giving to the community, it is committed to providing financial and technical assistance to high school students seeking to pursue higher vocal programs.

"It gives me a good feeling to know that we're serving the community and bringing joy through the power of music," Pillar said.

He added that he's been with the group for about 30 years now.

The chorus performs a wide variety of music, including classical, spiritual and popular pieces. In 2003, the chorus produced its first CD, consisting of chorus favorites in commemoration of their 70th Anniversary.

Bober is one of the choir's composers. He's written and arranged a number of pieces that the choir has performed over the years.

"I just try to put something together musically, that Norman Rockwell would put to a canvas when he's painting."

"Music is a beautiful art form," Bober said.

In 1993 and 1999, the chorus was asked to sing backup for Grammy-winning vocalist Judy Collins.

"That was a real experience for us," Pillar said. "It's amazing to think of all the things we've been able to accomplish, all of which have been member-driven."

He said the group has created a name for themselves in South-

east Michigan. They've performed alongside a number of local symphonies, have participated in benefit and charity events, as well as sung for many civic and community groups.

The membership ranges from year to year, and has been as many as 100 people strong. For the past 30 years, the chorus has sustained its operations by patron donations, member dues and "free-will" offerings from its audiences.

Pillar said he hopes to get more GM employees and retirees involved.

The chorus is about to assemble for its fall season starting with practices in early September on Monday evenings at 6:45 p.m. in Lincoln High School (just east of Van Dyke and south of Nine Mile).

"We're really excited about this next era of the chorus," Pillar said.

To find out more about the chorus, visit www.gmchorus.com.

Faurecia Fights Hunger

Faurecia might be an international company with offices and production facilities around the world, including its North American headquarters based in Auburn Hills, but that doesn't stop the company's employees from helping out people on a local basis.

Officials of the auto parts supplier are challenging employees in the U.S., Canada and Mexico to exceed last year's collection total of more than 700,000 meals donated to participating food banks.

The effort is a corporate initiative called FUELS - Faurecia Unites with Employees for Local Service.

Faurecia and its employees have provided more than 1.3 million meals since the program began in 2010, said Stacie Tong, Faurecia North America's director of Communications.

Throughout September, which marks Hunger Action Month, Faurecia's more than 20,000 employees from its 47 locations in North America are challenged to collect the highest quantity of non-perishable food items to help fight hunger.

In addition to donating food, Faurecia employees will participate in volunteer days with their local partner food banks.

"Millions of people struggle every day with hunger, which affects one in six hard-working adults, children and seniors within our own community," said W. DeWayne Wells, president of Gleaners Community Food Bank of Southeastern Michigan.

"It's inspiring to see programs like FUELS, in which citizens are recognizing community needs and reaching out to their deserving neighbors."

"The impact it has made has been remarkable."

Now in its fourth year, FUELS

continues to evolve as the program grows and participants consistently identify new ways to benefit more people in need, Tong said.

For the first time, employees are joining together to contribute more cash donations. A single dollar donation can provide three meals. Cash donations will be used to secure food from local farmers to ensure families have access to nutritious, high-quality produce, further benefiting communities by buying locally grown goods.

Faurecia will contribute monetary donations as sites' collection totals rise. For each site that meets its collection goal, the company pledges to contribute \$500 to the site's local food bank partner, Tong said.

The site that collects the most meals per employee each week will receive an extra \$1,000 donation for its food bank. Faurecia is further pledging \$5,000 for one site in the U.S./Canada and one site in Mexico that collect the most meals per employee.

"Companies are more than the products they make," said Mike Heneka, president of Faurecia North America.

"They are citizens of their communities and, above all, people who care about their colleagues and neighbors."

"FUELS is Faurecia's way of giving back to all the people and organizations that have supported us, as well as a way to help communities grow and thrive."

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