

## **1. NewVoices activities over the past 12 months:**

Organizational changes: In August 2015 we wrote a new strategic plan and adopted new bylaws, marking the implementation phase of a governance overhaul two years in the making. Since then, we have implemented director and officer term limits, elected new board officers, created a board recruitment strategy and elected 4 new directors who meet specific board needs. The strategic plan reaffirms and advances our artistic direction: diverse choral repertoire, performed to a high standard by local artists, and responsive to community issues and feedback.

Artistic and organizational overview: Our 2015-16 season set a new standard for newVoices' community-engaged programming. We opened with *Facing the Music* (10.23.2015), a concert planned in partnership with the Sexual Assault Crisis Center to focus attention on the increasing incidence of human trafficking in the Fox Cities. We gave voice to the issue by programming four narratives for the music: the dilemma, a glimmer of hope, freedom, and our responsibility. Educational activities included workshops for our ensemble (including 37 High School Master Singers who participated in all Fall rehearsals and concert), a community read, a social media campaign to raise issue awareness, and a pre-concert panel discussion. *Christmas at the Chapel* (12.19.2015) matinee and evening concerts continued our tradition of an all-sacred program featuring familiar and not-so-familiar holiday songs, audience sing-alongs, and selections from Handel's *Messiah*. Our annual fundraiser, *Cabaret* (2.13.2016) showcased soloists, small groups, and the chorus in an evening of off-Broadway entertainment. The season concluded with *Wanting Memories* (4.23.2016). In partnership with the Fox Valley Memory Project, we sang a concert of compassion and understanding for community members living with memory loss. Supporting activities included an outreach performance tailored for people with moderate to advanced dementia and featuring a community choir of dementia patients and caregivers, newVoices singer-volunteers becoming certified to lead music at Memory Café gatherings, and a pre-concert talk by a dementia researcher on the connection between memory and music.

Organizationally, we focused on governance and administrative systems and on increasing financial capacity. In addition to the governance overhaul discussed above, the board created a new Finance and Administration Committee, implemented new internal controls policies, and developed a framework for greater board-ED partnership in fundraising. Meeting our strategic objective of having the 2016-17 season set in January enabled the ED and board members to begin soliciting sponsors and advertisers months earlier than past seasons, and to invest more time in identifying and cultivating new corporate and individual prospects. The ED was invited to participate in a pilot nonprofit leadership program through the community foundation.

Special achievements: Doing a concert on sex trafficking was slightly terrifying: artistically challenging to program, and not a topic audiences typically associate with choral music. The reality outstripped our most optimistic hopes: a capacity crowd for the pre-concert talk, 671 audience members (a fall concert record!) including more than 100 high school students, and a concert that ended with the audience on its feet and singing along. One of our guest speakers wrote, "*I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to be part of such a phenomenal event. The music was absolutely amazing and I was so moved on many songs. It was wonderful to see such a collaborative effort and I'm thrilled to be in partnership with all of you.*" We were astonished to gain national recognition—the 2016 Chorus America Education and Community Engagement Award was given to newVoices for our 2015-16 programming on the issues of human trafficking and memory loss. Chorus America, the national association for choirs in the United States and Canada, presented newVoices with the award in June and featured newVoices as a case study in their quarterly publication *The Voice*.

Greatest challenge: Like most small arts organizations, newVoices struggles to secure sufficient donor and sponsor support in a funding environment increasingly focused on basic needs and utilitarian outcomes. As noted in the Fox Cities Leading Indicators for Excellence (LIFE) community needs study, many corporate and foundation donors that once supported local arts have shifted their giving to basic needs and early education. We have responded by working to cultivate new sponsors and provide exceptional stewardship. For example, we worked with the Fox Valley Symphony to persuade the U.S. Venture Foundation, a major basic needs funder, that there are vital “basic needs of music” not being met in our community; the Foundation committed \$40,000 to fund a four-year series of annual choral-orchestral masterworks.

**2. FY 16 Creation and Presentation grant funds were used for:** NewVoices gratefully used the \$2000 grant for essential operating expenses not readily funded by other sponsors:

<u>Expense Item:</u>	<u>Amount of C&amp;P funds spent on that item:</u>
Executive Director salary	\$1000
Business Manager wages	\$1000

**3. Expanding/intensifying connections with community:** NewVoices committed to building a strong Northeast Wisconsin through music that is inspiring and uplifting; we literally aspire to give voice to issues that can be hard to talk about, but that are essential to the vitality of our community. We have broadened, deepened, and diversified our community impact by partnering with agencies related to a concert’s topic to craft themes that can be told through music, identify community audiences for outreach, and develop supplemental activities that bring the ensemble and community together outside the concert hall. For example, our primary partner for *Facing the Music* last fall was the Sexual Assault Crisis Center; but we also worked with a regional Human Trafficking Task Force, Harbor House domestic violence center, Voices of Men anti-sexual violence organization, and area schools and libraries to help us with programming before and during the concert and/or to connect with new audiences. We have deepened the experience for our singers by engaging them in volunteerism and education outside of rehearsal and performance, through one-time events like a community read as well as ongoing programs such as leading music at monthly Memory Cafés for the Fox Valley Memory Project. We have also worked to deepen the artistic experience with opportunities to perform masterworks beyond our usual scope through our new multi-year collaboration with the Fox Valley Symphony Orchestra. We diversify participation by sharing our stage with others, such as the High School Master Singers from 14 schools throughout the Oshkosh – Green Bay corridor, the Appleton Boy Choir, the Lawrence Academy Young Men’s Chorus, the Lawrence Academy Girl Choir, and others.

**4. Mission:** NewVoices remains committed to the mission and work described in our full year application. Our mission is still to present outstanding choral music that provides significant artistic, educational, and entertaining experiences to enrich our performers and our audiences.

**5. Involving legislators:** At the beginning of each season our board president sends personal letters to 80+ local, state, and US elected officials inviting them to our concerts. They are also on our regular mailing list and receive our season brochure, postcards, and other materials. We occasionally see our own Assembly representative in the audience, and receive some letters of thanks for the invitation, as we did again this year from Governor Walker. Local aldermen and the mayor of Appleton are often guests in our audience. The mayor was also a guest for our community panel on human trafficking education in 2015.

**6. Board point person for 2016-17:** Jenna Stone, Board President, logastellus@gmail.com