

## **MOSAIC HARMONY COMMUNITY BUILDING TEAM (COMMITTEE)**

### **HISTORY AND MISSION**

#### History

At the Mosaic Harmony Town Hall meeting in June of 2010 there was a discussion about Mosaic Harmony's "identity crisis". Several members made comments and Asa Lee, our keyboardist at the time, said, "We call ourselves a diverse group but we need more connection with each other to bring out the diversity." Shana Spiegel expressed an interest in having the choir "walk our talk" and encouraged more active exploration of our claim of "unity through diversity". As a result of this conversation, the Mosaic Harmony Community Building Committee was eventually established, with board approval, in the Fall of 2011. Current choir members who are long time participants in the committee are Menda Ahart, Karen Flann, and Virginia Manczuk and Shana Spiegel. Newer members include Teresa McConnel, Midge Holmes, Crystal Jefferson, Eddy Nalls and Lauren Ramenofsky. The committee is open to new members at any time.

Since the CBC was established, more opportunities for choir members to connect have arisen through a variety of activities sponsored by this committee and others. Regular use of name tags was reinstated by the membership committee. Opportunities for simultaneous fundraising and socializing were developed by the board (bingo, karaoke). During the 2016-2017 season, Sharon VanDuizend arranged for us to attend a play together that also benefitted Mosaic Harmony. The CBC encouraged early arrival to rehearsals for icebreakers that we offered so that members would have opportunities to interact with other members who they did not know. We also sponsored "early bird dinners" where members "on the go" could bring their own meal and have dinner together. Diana Menefee, a retired choir member, had a major role in moving us toward more communal events.

#### Mission

We created this mission statement: *Recognizing that peace and unity comes only with understanding, the mission of Mosaic Harmony's Community Building Committee is to be a catalyst for members that they might know and understand each other better and, in so doing, reach out in confidence to our audiences.*

We were able to organize one-day retreats in March of 2012, October of 2013 and March of 2016. The first two retreats paid for themselves as there was no budget allotted. The costs were covered by the fee paid by attendees (\$20). For the third retreat, the board had included a line item in the budget for the

committee and this supplemented the fees paid by attendees for the event. We were fortunate that Asa Lee was our facilitator for all of the retreats. In addition to knowing the choir as an insider, he is a pastor, a professor of world religions, and has experience with helping groups with community building. The retreats offered plenary sessions, small group breakout sessions and lunch together. Topics included:

1. What does it mean to be part of this Mosaic Harmony Community singing this kind of music?
2. How do the individual narratives of members become the collective narrative of the choir?
3. How do the lyrics in our repertoire of songs represent our understanding of and presentation of diversity?

For the 2015-2016 season, in addition to putting on the retreat, we looked into the possibility of sponsoring a social gathering the evening of the dress rehearsal for the participants in the June diversity concert. Unfortunately, the logistics were too complicated and we were not successful.

#### The Spider Plant Project

Another idea to build community in the choir was stimulated by this article in the Washington Post:

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/how-the-fonz-takes-care-of-a-plant-smuggled-out-of-nazi-germany/2016/03/11/2f77f9a0-db06-11e5-925f-1d10062cc82d\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/how-the-fonz-takes-care-of-a-plant-smuggled-out-of-nazi-germany/2016/03/11/2f77f9a0-db06-11e5-925f-1d10062cc82d_story.html)

Henry Winkler described a spider plant that has survived since 1939 when it was smuggled out of Germany. He shared how it is an important tie to the family of exiled German immigrants that he grew up with. They took the place of his extended family, who perished in the Holocaust. He still has the plant that grew from a cutting of that original plant, one of the prized possessions he took with him from New York to Hollywood in the 1970's. He gives cuttings to family and friends to extend its reach.

Shana bought a spider plant and planted cuttings from it and from one that Karen Flann donated. During the 2016-2017 season we gave them to current members who were interested, and new members as they joined. With interest from the choir members and the growth additional "babies" to plant, the project will be continued.

(Budget consideration: cost of terra cotta pots and potting soil.)