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## ‘It’s all about praising God,’ director says

By Rachel COleman

• Leader & Times

As holidays go, Thanksgiving and Christmas will claim the lion’s share of attention over the next month. Even so, a group of local musicians has already begun to prepare for a celebration in 2014. The Black History Month Community Choir began weekly rehearsals last week, and will continue after the Thanksgiving holiday wraps up. Practices resume at 6 p.m. Dec. 2, and will continue each Monday throughout the remainder of the year.

“It’s something that we’ve always tried to start early, in order to give people an opportunity to learn the music,” said former director Gwendolyn Moore.

Over the past few years, Moore has handed the reins over to Melody Green, who will direct the choir this year in its concert Feb. 23, 2014.

“We always perform on the last Sunday of Black History Month,” said Moore. “It’s a celebration and a way to end the month with the entire community joining in.”

At the 2013 concert, musical groups from several local churches performed, some singing in Spanish. An interpretive dance troupe also performed.

“We’re inviting everybody who’s interested, and would like to participate,” Moore said. “We want to make it as versatile as possible and get as many people as possible to participate. So although people’s attention is focused on Christmas programs and whatnot, they can be looking ahead to something for Black History Month.”

In the meantime, Moore hopes the BHMCC will find a bit of time to perform Christmas carols at Liberal Good Samaritan Center, as it has done in the past.

“The folks out there enjoy it, we enjoy it, and I would like to see that happen again,” she said. “This is a community choir, so we do try to contribute to events in our community.”

The choir’s regular practices will be conducted at Deliverance Powerhouse Church of God in Christ, located at 1038 N. Nebraska, although two sessions, Dec. 9 and 16, are scheduled for Christ Temple Church, 212 S. Roosevelt. The group will not meet on Dec. 23 and 30, but will resume practice on Jan. 6.

Since the BHMCC performs in traditional gospel mode, no sheet music is used to learn the pieces selected for performance. Choir members learn the songs by ear, with printed lyric sheets to learn the words. The experience can be strange at first, said longtime choir participant Danny Madeiros last year, but the company makes it less daunting.

“People are so welcoming and they made us feel right at home,” he said. “And we learned the music just fine.”

Moore and Green encourage the public to give traditional gospel music a try.

“It’s all about praising God,” not performance or personal, Green said during 2013 rehearsals. “We come here to sing, and to praise him. It’s almost like having church.”

For more information, contact Moore at 626-7518.

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