

THE DOWNTOWN CAROLERS



THIRTY YEARS OF CAROLING

The Downtown Carolers

The Downtown Carolers have been singing together for over 30 years. Thirty years. Wow. Who would have thought anyone would want to sing Christmas carols for 30 years? Even more, who would have thought anyone could find places that would let them sing Christmas carols for 30 years?

The longevity of the Downtown Carolers can be attributed to the joy of singing and especially the joy of singing to people who can use a little extra cheer during the Christmas season.

For over 30 years, The Downtown Carolers have sung at hospitals, nursing homes, retirement homes, men's and women's clubs, and churches throughout the Chattanooga area.

This history of The Downtown Carolers is written as a fond remembrance of 30+ years of fun, fellowship, and music.

Thanks to everyone who sang and everyone who listened.

THE BEGINNING

The Downtown Carolers got their start in 1981. Rick Driggans and Ann Moore knew each other from the early 1970's at Ridgeview Baptist Church where Ann led the Youth Choir. In 1980, Rick and some of the alumni of the Ridgeview Youth Choir Christmas caroled at the Moores. The singers and singees enjoyed the experience enough for Ann and Rick to decide to try to put together a group to go Christmas caroling on a regular basis.

Ann and her husband Lynn were both professional musical educators and knew several similarly musical friends from their days at Middle Tennessee State University who lived in the Chattanooga area and enjoyed singing. Rick and his wife Judy worked at the Tennessee Valley Authority and had friends there who, while not professional musicians, sang in church choirs and other amateur groups.



The first practice was held at the Driggans' home and included the following charter members:

- Rick & Judy Driggans
- Ann & Lynn Moore
- Jim & Jensi Souders
- Van & Wilma Needham
- Russell & Kathy Robertson
- Randy and Angie Smith

The group came from several different churches and from Hixson, Soddy Daisy, and East Brainerd. For the lack of a better name, it was decided the group would be called the Downtown Carolers.

The first season was memorable for several events. Kathy Robertson was very pregnant with her first child (born in December), and on the first night of caroling it started sleeting. Jim Souders had volunteered to drive the carolers in his motor home to the first performance which was to be in Stonehenge, a subdivision at the top of a very steep hill. About halfway up the hill, the motorhome lost traction and started sliding back toward the Robertsons who were driving along behind. Fortunately, Russell backed out of the way and Jim was able to bring the vehicle to a stop. After a quick phone call, an alternate venue was found and the Downtown Carolers gave the first of many performances at St. Barnabus, a downtown nursing home.

• CHAPTER 2 •

DTC EVENTS

Details about the first few years of the DTC are sketchy since communications were done by telephone (no computers). All that is known for sure is that the DTC got together at least once per year (and usually several times) to eat and practice carols (in that order) and to sing at St. Barnabus and other venues.

The paper trail begins in 1984. The DTC got together in the summer for a luau to help prepare Jim and Jensi Souders for a Hawaiian Cruise. Later that year they had a covered-dish dinner and practice at the home of Van and Wilma Needham. Performances included St. Barnabus on December 22nd. Following the performance, the DTC met for dinner at the Loft where the highlight of the evening involved finding typos on the menu, including “Soup fo the Day” and Futtuccini” (members of the DTC have always been easily amused).

In 1985, the DTC had two practices, one at the new home of Rick & Judy Driggans on Signal Mountain and the second at the home of Frances and Kibler Hysinger.

In 1985, the DTC had two practices, one at the new home of Rick & Judy Driggans on Signal Mountain and the second at the home of Frances and Kibler Hysinger. The DTC sang at St. Barnabus and Alexian Village. DTC membership had grown to 25 and included:

Ann & Lynn Moore	Tawnee & David Kirby
Rick & Judy Driggans	Ted & Mary Benjamin
Kathy & Russell Robertson	Frances & Kibler Hysinger
Jim & Jensi Souders	Debbie and Foster Mathes
Van & Wilma Needham	Debbie Shepard
Randy Smith	Bruce & Nina Maples
Susie Jackson	Steve & Terri Brothers

In 1986 the DTC had a cookout in May and got together to practice in September at the Moores’, in October at the Maples’, in November at the Robertsons’ and the Driggans’, and at the Souders’ in December. Performances included the Daisy Methodist Church, Downtown General Hospital, and St. Barnabus. New members included Bob & Kim Shomaker, Scott & Lynn Keller, and Sharon Gill.

In 1987, the DTC practiced at the Driggans' in October and at Sharon Gill's home in November. The DTC had its first (and last) semi-commercial performance at a Hallmark Store in Ft. Oglethorpe. The DTC also performed at a dinner meeting at Christ United Methodist Church (free food), a meeting of Delta Kappa Gamma (no food), Daisy Methodist Church, St. Barnabus, and Downtown General. The annual post-caroling dinner was held at Kanpai of Tokyo. This year was notable for the initial appearance of green sweaters. Fortunately, this was a short-lived phenomenon.

In 1988, Bob Wilkerson joined the DTC and two charter members, Van & Wilma Needham, became long-distance members when they moved to Cincinnati. Practices were held in August at the Moores', September at the Souders' new home in Ooltewah, and at the Driggans' in October. A highlight of the year was a rafting trip down the Ocoee in September when everyone got bounced out of the raft - the guide was obviously a music critic. Drier performances included Christ United Methodist Church, St. Barnabus, Downtown General Hospital, Cambridge Hall, and the John C. Calvin Retirement Home. Dinner was at Roy Pepper's Porch (one of many restaurants that did not long survive hosting the DTC). Sixteen members of the DTC met in Gatlinburg in January 1989 for a weekend getaway where they made their first recording at the Sound Tracks studio.

In 1989, the DTC practiced in October, November, and December. New members Glenn and Susie Showalter, Dennie & Marti Wolfgang, Chris & Carlene Kidwell, and Jim Westbrook joined the

DTC at performances which included Alexian Village, St. Barnabus, Downtown General, and the John Calvin Home. In January 1990, fourteen members of the DTC made a return appearance at a chalet in Gatlinburg where our fearless leader, Ann Moore, became a little less fearless when she collided with a runaway skater and bruised her pride.

The 1990 caroling season, the DTC's 10th year, got off to a good start with a practice in October but then quickly descended into chaos when the DTC performed at Christ United Methodist Church for the Chattanooga District Methodist Ministers - what a rough crowd. The DTC sang again at CUMC for a fellowship dinner, at Cambridge Hall, and finished up with a performance at St. Barnabus followed by dinner at Mount Vernon. New members in 1990 included Bo and Mary Mahoney, Jim & Barbara Northcut, and Dee Wilkerson.

The 1991 season started with practices in October and November. Performances include Alexian Village, the Soddy Daisy Women's Club, Daisy United Methodist Church, Christ United Methodist Church, St. Barnabus, and Cambridge Hall. At the performance at CUMC, Randy Smith was featured on a guitar solo on Silent Night that reduced the rest of the DTC to tears (of hysterical laughter).

In 1992, the DTC practiced twice and sang at St. Barnabus and Alexian Village. At St. Barnabus the DTC was joined by Justin, Randy Smith's son and Ann Moore's daughters Michelle and Traci.

In 1993, the DTC had one practice in November. Performances included the Delta Kappa Gamma Christmas Gala, Christ United Methodist Church, St. Barnabus, and Alexian Village.

In 1994, the DTC practiced at the Souders and welcomed three new members: Betty Moss, Nancy Dryden, and Peggy Parker (Randy Smith's fiancée). Performances included the Life Care Center of Red Bank, Alexian Village, St. Barnabus, and the First Presbyterian Laymen's Club. The post-caroling dinner was held at Mount Vernon.

In 1995, the DTC practiced in November at the Brothers. Scott & Lynn Keller became long-distance members when they moved to Memphis where Scott started medical school (no, he did not major in geriatrics). Rick & Judy Driggans moved to Knoxville and turned into commuting carolers. Performances included Hamilton County Assisted Living, St. Barnabus (followed by dinner at Mount Vernon), the First Presbyterian Laymen's Club, and Alexian Village.

In 1996, the DTC practiced in November and were joined by new members Jeff & Dee Visser and John & Gaye Slaten. Performances included Alexian Village and St. Barnabus (followed by dinner at Mount Vernon).

In 1997, the DTC hit a new low when past member Carlene Kidwell rejoined under court order. Ms. Kidwell was caught speeding and sentenced to public service which included caroling with the DTC at St. Barnabus and Alexian Village.

In 1998, the DTC practiced in November and sang at Heritage Landing and St. Barnabus.

In 1999, the Driggans moved back to Chattanooga and hosted the DTC practice at their home in East Brainerd. Bonnie Clark, Betty Julian's sister, joined the DTC in performances at Grand Courts, Alexian Village and St. Barnabus followed by dinner (for the last time) at Mount Vernon. The DTC lost one of its founding members, Randy Smith, who died in a plane crash.

In 2000, the DTC began the new millennium by creating its first website (www.thedowntowncarolers.org) and met to practice in November. New members Delia Price, Terry Floyd, and Pete and Kris Winkler joined the DTC in performances included Christ United Methodist, Delta Kappa Gamma, Grand Courts, Red Bank Baptist Church, Alexian Village, and St. Barnabus.

In 2001, the DTC rehearsed at the Souders' in November and performed for the Chattanooga Music Teachers and St. Barnabus.

In 2002, the DTC practiced in November at the Wolfgang's and sang at Christ United Methodist, Hamilton County Nursing Home, Alexian Village and St. Barnabus.

In 2003, the DTC practiced in November and sang at Hamilton County Nursing Home, Alexian Village and St. Barnabus.

In 2004, the DTC practiced at the Driggans' in November and performed at St. Barnabus, the Red Bank Life Care Center, Alexian

Village, the Creekside Retirement Home, and the Standefer Nursing Home.

In 2005, the DTC practiced at the Souders' in November. This 25th anniversary version of the DTC performed with the Midsouth Band at its Christmas Concert at Brainerd United Methodist Church where the performance was recorded for posterity. The DTC also sang at Creekside Retirement Home, Red Bank Life Care Center, and St. Barnabus.

In 2006, the DTC rehearsed in November at the Shomaker's. Performances included Alexian Village, Standefer Nursing Home, Creekside Retirement Home, Alpha Phi Chapter Christmas Meeting, and St. Barnabus.

In 2007, the DTC practiced in November at the Shomaker's and sang at the new St. Barnabus Nursing Home, at the St. Barnabus Apartments, and Alexian Village.

In 2008, the DTC practiced in November at the Shomaker's and sang at Southern Living Retirement Home, Creekside Retirement Home, the St. Barnabus Nursing Home and Apartments, and Alexian Village. New members included Stephanie Pearson and Katheryne Moore.

In 2009, the DTC practiced in November at the Souders' and sang at Standefer, Alexian village, and the St. Barnabus Nursing Home and Apartments.

In 2010, the DTC practiced in November at the Driggans' and sang at Alexian Village, at Brainerd United Methodist with the MidSouth Band, and at the St. Barnabus Nursing Home and Apartments.

In 2011, the DTC practiced at the Moores' and sang at Southern Living, the St. Barnabus Nursing Home and, for the last time, at the St. Barnabus Apartments.

PHOTOS

• CHAPTER 3 •

While there has been a core group throughout the three plus decades The Downtown Carolers have been singing, many talented singers have come and gone.

Step through the photos to see the graying of The Downtown Carolers through the years.

Hear the Downtown Carolers

Gallery 3.1 The Downtown Caroler Annual Photos



The Founding Members in Galtlinburg 1982



LETTERS

Every year, a letter would go out to past and prospective Downtown Carolers telling them about scheduled practices and performances.

Occasionally they would address topical issues of the day, sometimes they would refer to inside jokes, and sometimes they would just be silly.

Step through the years with The Downtown Carolers.

1985



THE DOWNTOWN CAROLERS



IN SPITE OF POPULAR DEMAND
BACK FOR A FOURTH SEASON
"WE'LL DO IT TIL WE GET IT RIGHT"

November 11, 1985

Dear Downtown Carolers:

Our first official practice of 1985 is going to take place at Rick and Judy's new house on Saturday night, November 16, at 6:00 p.m. A map is enclosed to help you find the house. For those of you who can't read maps, here are instructions which may help you get here (no promises).

Get on Taft Highway (Hwy 127) either from Signal Mountain Boulevard or (for the more adventurous) the "W" road. Continue on Taft Highway (you will pass Brown Brother's Hardware on the right) until you come to two large green water towers on the right side of the road. Then start looking on the left and turn left on Anderson Pike at the Nazarene Church. Once on Anderson Pike you will pass Bachman Elementary School on the left. Then you turn left between two stone walls on Fox Run Drive. Take the second right onto Wood Sorrell Lane. Our address is 2421 Wood Sorrell. It is a tan-colored house on the right side of the road. Our phone number is 886-5229 (additional instructions are available for a small fee).

The menu will be "savory salads" and "delightful desserts". Judy will be providing the lettuce and other common salad toppings. Rick will make the iced tea and hot apple cider. Please bring either a salad (ham salad, chicken salad, tuna salad, potato salad, macaroni salad, this-and-that salad, and any other kind of salad you can think of) or a dessert. Please note that there will be no "Soup Fo The Day" **. Also, "Futtuccini" ** is definitely out of season.

We may have several new faces among the Downtown Carolers this year. Those invited include:

Ann & Lynn Moore	Van & Wilma Needham
Susie Jackson	Ted & Mary Benjamin
Tawnee & David Kirby	Frances & Kibler Hysinger
Debbie & Foster Mathes	Jim & Jensi Souders
Kathy & Russell Robertson	Randy Smith & "Mystery Soprano"
(New) Bruce & Nina Maples	(New) Steve & Terri Brothers

Including Judy & Rick, that makes twenty-five. We hope to see you on Saturday.

** Don't feel bad if you don't understand this. You had to be there.



• CHAPTER 5 •

MEMBERS

Thanks to everyone who proudly (or not) wore the red sweater over the years.

Ted & Mary Benjamin
Steve & Terri Brothers
Gary Bynum
Bonny Clark
Rick & Judy Driggans
Nancy Dryden
Jim & Marcia Fletcher
Terry Floyd
Melinda Gaddis
Sharon Gill
Ken & Patti Gross
Kibler & Francis Hysinger
Betty Julian
Scott & Lynn Keller
Chris & Carlene Kidwell
Winston & Linda Knowles

Brian & Susan Klapman
Bo & Mary Mahoney
Bruce & Nina Maples
Foster & Debbie Mathes
Kevin & Laura Moore
Lynn & Ann Moore
Katheryne Moore
Traci Moore
Van & Wilma Needham
Jim & Barbara Northcut
Stephanie Pearson
Charles & Helen Perry
Delia Price
Russell & Kathy Robertson
Dennis & Sharon Rorex
Sandy Shadden

Debbie Shepard
Bob & Kim Shomaker
Glenn & Susan Showalter
John & Gaye Slaten
Karen Slaten
Randy & Peggy Smith
Dino & Peggy Smith
Jim & Jensi Souders
Mike & Sandra Steakley
Max & Sonya Steele
Tawnee Stimson
Jeff & Dee Visser
Jim & Susie Westbrook
Bob Wilkerson
Pete & Kris Winkler
Dennie & Marti Wolfgang

DTC REPERTOIRE

Here We Come a Caroling

Sing We Now of Christmas

Holy Night

Sing A Joyful Alleluia

Joy to the World

I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day

Ring the Bells

Angels We Have Heard on High

Away in a Manger

No Room

Mary's Little Boy Child

The Holly and the Ivy

Silent Night

The Snow Lay On the Ground

He Came Here for Me

We Three Kings

Lullay Thou Little Tiny Child

In the Bleak Midwinter

Lo How A Rose E'er Blooming

Do You Hear What I Hear

Come On, Ring Those Bells

Carol of the Bells

Deck the Halls

Oh Christmas Tree

The Christmas Song

Jingle Bells

White Christmas

Blue Christmas

Rudolph The Red Nosed Reindeer

We Wish You A Merry Christmas