

Noteworthy

The Newsletter of Heartland Sings, Inc.

Season announced, new website launched!

An exciting season from Heartland Sings is coming to you in 2023-2024, and we are also thrilled to launch an all new website. Visit HeartlandSings.org and check out the updated look, which includes many new user friendly features. The site design and content update is courtesy of Christie Browning at **content by request**, and Allison Pareis, Heartland Sings' Director of Marketing.

- Music of the Americas* — Oct. 8, 2023
- Spirit of Christmas* — Dec. 15-17, 2023
- Annual MLK commemoration* — Jan. 14, 2024
- Celtic Landscapes* — Mar. 16-17, 2024
- Vocal Artists Competition* — May 20-22, 2024
- A Night at the Opera* — May 22, 2024!



A great way for you to support the mission and vision of Heartland Sings is simply by purchasing tickets to our regular season concerts. You can buy single ones, but we recommend season tickets because we think you will enjoy each unique performance we have planned! At \$140 for four concerts, they are a great value, and with our new website, ordering is easier than ever.

www.heartlandsings.org/tickets

We hope you will fall for Heartland Sings

Can you hear a *September Serenade*? Will you help us reap a *Harvest of Harmony*? Those are our September and October giving themes, respectively. **Donations at this time will give us a boost as we head into our 27th concert season.** Simply visit our website and click the "Donate" button in the upper right corner.

Heartland Sings donors have already received a special code via email for a discount off of season ticket purchases. If you would like to become a donor and utilize this donor discount, please email our Director of Development, Laura Burger, at laura@heartlandsings.org or call our offices at 260-436-8080. **Offer is good through October 1st.**

Recurring donations help us manage our budget, and give us all the feels. Visit our website and learn how to give monthly. We'll be so grateful.

Spotlight on: Fran Page



Photo: Allison Pareis

What do a Bingo candy girl, a pizza parlor night manager and a Social Security Claims Administrator have in common? They are all positions once held by Frances Page, Heartland Sings' office manager, at some point in her life. There are a select few people who can trace their association with the organization back to the beginning, and Fran is one of them. Here is a glimpse into the interesting life she has led, and how she plans to spend her time upon retiring this October.

Fran's parents, who she describes as hard working, good people, were from Pittsburgh. Four of her six siblings were born there, while two others and she were born and raised in Erie, Pennsylvania. Fran is the youngest of the seven children: two of her sisters are in their eighties and one is 79, and her three brothers have all passed away.

Fran got an early taste of working life when she started serving as a candy girl at Bingo games while still in grade school. Bingo was a big deal for the Catholic churches, and the Holy Rosary Parish hosted games twice a week on two floors of their building. "You had to sort of work your way up," Fran says. Her role as candy girl was to "walk amongst the tables and yell out 'Candy!'" She advanced to selling Bingo cards and specials out on the floor, then ultimately reached the coveted position of Bingo Caller. This continued to be her job throughout her high school years.

Following graduation, Fran followed the precedent set by two of her older sisters and entered a convent. After the first year, she was a novice for two years, a period during which the learning process is key. She attended two years of college, then taught first grade for two years while working to earn additional credits with summer and after school classes. After her canonical year, she took temporary vows for one year, but ultimately did not feel called to take her final vows. "After I left, I had a whole year of credits [I needed to complete] to earn a bachelor's degree in elementary education," Fran says. During that year, she did Federal Work-Study through the U.S. Social Security Administration (SSA). She soon became a valuable asset to them as a commuter, because the college could put her in jobs out in the community rather than on campus. She met a lot of nice people there who encouraged her to take the Civil Service Exam, which she did. She also completed and received her BA in Education at the end of that year.



Fran, Mary Jo & Bob, 2008

Everyone at Heartland Sings wishes Fran well in her retirement, though we expect to still see her at our concerts. We cannot thank her enough for all she has done for the organization, for more than 26 years!

Then Fran and a couple of other girls from Erie were recruited to teach in Glen Burnie, Maryland, and she needed to earn some money for the deposit on an apartment she would be sharing with them. She got a summer job at a pizza place owned by a Greek man named Dimitri. "I think I was there for a week and he made me the night manager," Fran says.

After a year in Glen Burnie, she decided that teaching wasn't for her and moved back to Erie and began looking for work once again. "I tried Kelly Girls first, and they told me I didn't even make junior grade typist," Fran says with a laugh. "That looked like a hopeless case, so I stopped in to see the people at the Social Security Administration." They confirmed that she had passed the exam in June and invited her to come back later that day to be part of a panel interview. "So that's how my social security career began. But there was a hiring freeze and I couldn't get hired right away."



Fran, (left front) and others participating in a choral workshop, 2002.

"Lo and behold, Kelly Girls called me, even though I wasn't a junior grade typist," she continues. "They could send me to General Electric in Erie and I could work in the insurance department running a calculator machine kind of thing, adding up health insurance claims." Fran did that while the SSA hiring freeze was on; once it was lifted, she was hired and off she went to training to become a claims administrator.

In 1976, Fran transferred from the Erie SSA location to the office in Fort Wayne, Indiana. She married and had a son, then quit working two years later when she had her daughter. Later, she proposed working part-time to her manager and he was all for it, although that was not something they had done before. He found her a position where she could work three days per week. Fran continued her career with the SSA, retiring in January of 2004 after 30 years on the job.

In 1990, Fran met Robert Nance when he came to serve as Minister of Music at her church, First Presbyterian in downtown Fort Wayne. She sang in his choir until he left in 2000 to devote himself full time to a group he had founded in 1997 called the Heartland Chamber Chorale (HCC). But Fran and her friend, Mary Jo Meyer, had already been working with Bob on a volunteer basis, in the basement of his home on Fairfield Avenue, to help the fledgling organization. (When Bob later moved to Covington Creek Condominiums, the HCC offices moved to the lower level there.)

"All during that time, from when he started it. Mary Jo and I were in the basement, burning the midnight oil because he still had his church job and he had started the Heartland Chamber Chorale. He was also a member of the Indiana Choral Directors Association and did a newsletter for them. Mary Jo and I were the proofreaders and she would help him write his articles. So, yeah, we were there all the time."

The HCC hub finally moved out of Bob's basement to offices on the campus of St. Francis University in Fort Wayne in 2008. Fran says the only drawback was that she missed how well Bob fed them while they were working in his home. The new offices were in a former church building that had a highly suitable auditorium for HCC concerts.

Unfortunately, they were then moved to a small, campus-adjacent house on Leesburg Road in 2012 that was not adequate for their growing needs. In November of 2017, the organization, by then renamed Heartland Sings, Inc., moved to its current home in the Park Lake Building on Lake Avenue. Three units were purchased and the small staff worked in one while a second was remodeled into state of the art voice studios. (The final third of the property underwent a renovation in 2023 to provide the professional vocal arts organization with a place to produce video content.)

In its early stages, HCC concert tickets were free—the organization survived on donations and advertising sales. When ticket sales began, it was a big part of Fran's job and she explains the complicated process: "We used to have to dial up at the end of the day, it was called merchant services, and we'd have to type in these figures. It was crazy; all done over the phone. Nothing through the internet or anything like that, so it was a challenge."

From ticket sales and preparing and refiling music, Fran's duties have expanded over the years to include handling many of the financial responsibilities, in addition to every task involved with managing the office. Fran is taking two months to train Kara Jaurigue, who will take over the office manager position. Through all of the frustrating times, Fran hung in there, and a lot of it had to do with Bob Nance. "He was always very kind, very supportive," Fran says. "He's always been a good friend."

Asked how she plans to enjoy her retirement, Fran jokingly says, "I'm going to sleep in." She wants to spend more time with her son, daughter and son-in-law, and two grandsons, who are 11 and 14. And she would like to take more trips back to Erie to see her sisters. "Spending more time with family is what it all boils down to." And she will have more time for hobbies such as playing bridge and computer games. She has always enjoyed the arts and will continue to do so. Another of her goals is to look for more outlets for volunteering. "Something where you don't have to be there every day. I think it's just doing different things and finding your niche," she says.