

# Chatham Courier

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Photo by Glenn Clark

Conner Van Time, 11, front, sings with Coro Vivo, the young boys choir of the New Jersey Youth Chorus, during rehearsal Monday, March 27 at the Chatham United Methodist Church.

## NEW JERSEY YOUTH CHORUS CELEBRATES 25TH SEASON

By KATHY SHWIFF  
EDITOR

>> VIDEO ONLINE

For a video from this event, please visit us online at [chathamcourier.com](http://chathamcourier.com).

**CHATHAM** – An organization born at Trish Joyce's kitchen table in New Providence turns 25 years old this year.

The New Jersey Youth Chorus has grown from an idea to more than 175 students from about 35 towns in six counties participating in five choirs.

The choirs, which rehearses Monday afternoons at the Chatham United Methodist Church, 460 Main St., Chatham, will celebrate with a 25th anniversary gala Saturday, April 30 at Hanover Manor in East Hanover.

Performing at the gala will be Coriste, the high school girls choir, and Camerata, for boys in grades 7-12 with changing and changed voices, as well as some alumni who have pursued professional careers in music and directors and accompanists of the five choirs. Information about tickets is available online at [njyouthchorus.org/gala](http://njyouthchorus.org/gala).

"It's really a big year for us," said Joyce, who was teaching elementary and middle school music in the Bernardsville school system in 1992 when she founded the organization.

"There was just not a lot of time in the schedule for these young singers to rehearse and really have a choir," she said, adding that the

community children's choir movement in the United States was beginning at the same time.

She met with a group of parents who were very supportive of music and the arts, "and I said, 'Would you join me in helping me get this off the ground?'"

"It was started around a kitchen table from nothing," Joyce added.

They formed the Somerset Hills Children's Chorus, which changed its name to the New Jersey Youth Chorus in 2002.

Kate Evans, a Chatham High School senior who recently played Morticia Addams in the school musical, "The Addams Family," joined the New Jersey Youth Chorus in third grade.

She learned how to read music there and "met my best friends through it." During her freshman year, she was part of the choir that performed with Queen Latifah at the Super Bowl. She also performed with the chorus at Carnegie Hall and traveled to Ireland as well as to several U.S. cities with the organization.

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"The people you meet are incredible," she said, adding that she has found great mentors and great friends through the chorus. "It really is like another family."

Mary Kate Willmot, a junior at Chatham High School, will travel with Coriste to Vienna and Budapest after school ends in June. The choir will take part in a couple formal performances and will meet with community choirs in those European countries.

Mary Kate, who joined the New Jersey Youth Chorus in sixth grade, called it a wonderful experience. "The musicianship is unparalleled." Chorus participants are committed to singing and many pursue music as a career, she said.

Mary Kate, who also is a member of the high school's Select Choir, said she plans to major in music education in college and to teach at the elementary school level as a way of giving back to the teachers who influenced her.

The chorus's season runs from September through May or June, depending on whether a tour is scheduled

after the school year ends. A camp for incoming members usually is held at the end of August.

Tuition ranges from \$850 to \$1,400 depending on the choir.

The choirs rehearse once a week, and the director of each choir sends a weekly email to members and their parents outlining their assignments. "The children are expected to take the music and rehearse at home and come in prepared," Joyce said.

"It's definitely a commitment. It's a commitment to the program. They make a commitment to each other in the ensemble ... so that we are truly working as a team."

The New Jersey Youth Chorus will hold auditions in May and June.

Last fall, the organization began offering a musicianship class for second and third graders. No auditions are required for Primi Passi, which meets in Chatham on Tuesday afternoons. An eight-week class is offered in the fall for third graders and an eight-week class in the spring is open to second and third graders. They learn basic



Photos by Glenn Clark

Emily Komick, a freshman from Mendham, in blue, and Sarah Celentano, a freshman from Bernards Township, in red, snap as they rehearse a song. They are in the high school girls choir of the New Jersey Youth Chorus.

choral technique and music-reading skills through song, musical games and folk dance. Tuition for Primi Passi was \$160 to \$175 per session.

Other performances scheduled this spring:

- Coro Vivo, for boys in grades 4-8 whose voices have not changed, and Sola

- Voce, for girls in grades 6-8, will participate in the MCP Children's Choir Series Festival, a three-day festival that concludes with a concert at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., on Monday, April 10. Sola Voce is conducted by Robyn Lana and Coro Vivo by Rollo Dilworth.

- Camerata will sing for patients at Goryeb Children's Hospital, part of Atlantic Health System, in Morristown at 4:30 p.m. Thursday, April 20. That event is part of the chorus's "Kids for Kids" initiative, which aims to perform for and assist children's organizations and charities.

- Primo Coro, for girls in fourth and fifth grades, will participate in "GetMusic!," which stands for Girls Empowered Through Music, an all-girl festival hosted by the Pennsylvania Girlchoir, on May 17 in Philadelphia.

- NJYC's Spring Concert, on May 21 at Bernards High School in Bernardsville, will include all five choirs.

Earlier this spring, Coro Vivo and Sola Voce sang the national anthem at a Harlem Globetrotters' game at Madison Square Garden in New York, and Coriste was one of four choirs invited to perform at the 2017 Organization of American Kodály Educators annual conference in Philadelphia.

For information about the chorus, send email to [admin@njyouthchorus.org](mailto:admin@njyouthchorus.org) or call (973) 998-5670.



Trish Joyce conducts Coriste, the high school girls choir, during a rehearsal at Chatham United Methodist Church on Monday, March 27. She founded the New Jersey Youth Chorus at her kitchen table 25 years ago.