

Tumbleweeds, Family Café

The More the Merrier is a choir for everyone

If you love to sing but you don't have a venue outside the shower, National Dance Institute of New Mexico's new choir is holding a space for you.

The more the Merrier Choir, directed by Hannah Loomis, begins practice tomorrow and will meet at 6:15 p.m. Mondays for the next 20 weeks. Children under 10 must be accompanied by an adult, but older kids and adults can join with a family member or by themselves.

Whatever your age or musical experience, whether your voice would summon angels or curdle milk, Loomis will welcome you.

Loomis, who has a 4-year-old daughter, wishes music were a part of everyday life as it used to be. "To me, doing music at home is something you just do," Loomis says. "People used to sit around and played music or sang together. I see that dwindling. I don't see people gathering to sing anymore."

Her initial plan was to create a family choir, but she soon realized she didn't want to turn away adults who don't have families to sing with. "It's really coming from people telling me, 'I can't sing,' but they want to." Loomis says. "It makes me sad, because I think singing is one of the most joyous things."

"I've met some people who are singing-challenged, but I really believe there aren't many people who just make people cry if they open their mouth. I'm really curious to see who shows up and what I can do with them."

Loomis holds a bachelor's degree in music, began, studying piano as a young child and has sung in choirs "forever." Yet this group won't require auditions or ability to read music. The repertoire of Gospel, Irish, American traditional, jazz and Broadway songs will be taught entirely by "call and response" method.

"It should be a lot of fun," Loomis says. "That's going to be our primary focus."

She has another goal, however: To produce good sound. The choir will reflect the same teaching philosophy NDI uses in its school dance program: Make the choreography simple enough so kids who have never danced before can master it and do something fantastic.

"I'm going to push them," Loomis says. "I care what they sound like, but I want to start from where anybody can try." She will lead vocal warm-ups and teach proper breathing for producing the best sound.

"If I can get people in and they can be enthusiastic, we can learn to make a good sound together."

Tuition of \$20 per family is paid monthly. Loomis hopes members will consider the choir a semester commitment, so the group can develop skills together and perform publicly.

To register, call NDI-NM, 983-7646; or just show up at 6:15 p.m. Monday at the Dance Barns, 1140 Alto St., ready to sing.

