

Local choir group Aiken Singers looking for new director

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Longtime Aiken Singers director Diane Haslam (pictured here in 2019) has returned to England after living in Aiken since 2004. The community choir now has a vacancy for a new director. (Larry Wood/Aiken Standard file photo)

After a year of dormancy due to COVID-19, members of one Aiken community choir are ready to get back into the groove. But first, they need a director.

The Aiken Singers announced that Diane Haslam, founder and longtime director of the group, has moved back to her home country of England, leaving a vacancy for a new music director to lead the adult chorus.

Haslam worked with the Aiken Singers from the beginning, growing the choir from a small after-dinner neighborhood club to a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization with 50-60 members. Serving as both a music and artistic director, Haslam was involved in concert programming, fundraising and helping individual members improve.

Ken Hofstetter, president of the Aiken Singers board, said the group is “looking for somebody that can kind of step into those shoes and keep us on that track.”

The role is a paid part-time position, with a salary provided mostly through membership fees.

With no audition required, members of the Aiken Singers join to have fun and share the joy of singing, Hofstetter said.

“We sing everything from spirituals and church music, all the way to rock ‘n’ roll and opera. We do the whole spectrum,” Hofstetter said.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the Aiken Singers met every week for 10 months out of the year, with a two-month break in the summer.

The group performed two major performances annually in the spring and winter, along with multiple outreach performances at retirement communities, nursing homes and other locations.

The Aiken Singers hope to return to that schedule by the end of summer or the early fall, said soprano singer and former board president Judy Justice.

The Aiken Singers plan to provide more details about the music director role, including an official position announcement and job description. For more information, visit aikensingers.org.

Hofstetter and Justice emphasized that the choir is not a group of trained professionals, so the new director will need to be prepared to work with adults at all skill levels.

“We really need someone with some understanding of how to take people who have little or no musical training, to be able to unite with other singers who have that ability, and not to feel like they’re being left behind or anything,” Justice said.

Justice said she hopes former members will return after a year of pandemic shutdown. The Aiken Singers are also welcoming new members to the organization.

“It’s just a lot of fun,” Justice said. “And we do see it as a community outreach service organization that we are providing a music service to others.”



The Aiken Singers, pictured above with former director Diane Haslam in the middle, are seeking a new director following Haslam's return to her home country of England.