



Holly Fricks, 13, left, and Courtney Hinds, 9, are members of the St. Louis Children's Choirs.

Sing a song

Pair of girls making friends, music in choir

By Bev Pfeifer-Harms
Journal staff writer

Courtney Hinds, 9, of Crestwood, plans to become a rock star someday.

Holly Fricks, 13, of south county, has made a lot of new friends.

Both are members of the St. Louis Children's Choirs, an area-wide organization for children in grades one to 12. The choir was organized in 1978 with just a few children.

Now in her fifth year with the choirs, Holly said she has combined her love of singing with meeting lots of new people.

"I was nervous, at first," Holly said of her tryout. "I didn't think I knew anyone. I had heard them sing once and lots of people told me I'd probably make it."

Lots of people had told Courtney, who joined the choirs last year, that she had a good voice.

"But I didn't think I'd make it," she said. "I was scared."

Now, both girls have lots of friends in the choirs and enjoy the wide variety of music they sing.

The group comprises four separate mixed choirs — children's, chorale, concert and chamber. This fall, there will be about 200 children in the choirs, said director Ethelyn Sparfield.

The youngsters just returned from a summer concert tour of the Midwest, including Oklahoma, Texas, Arkansas and southern Missouri and they performed at the St. Louis V.P. Fair.

During the regular school year, the choirs perform with the St. Louis Symphony and Christmas concerts.

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Courtney and Holly are looking forward to the choirs' summer tour, next year, of the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and Austria.

Sparfield said some children are recommended for a choir audition by their school or church music teacher, other audition on their own.

"Some children have years of singing experience. Some have none," she said.

"What I look for are children who love to sing," Sparfield said. She also makes sure each child can echo various notes played on the piano — "match pitch."

Children are placed in one of the choirs according to their age and ability, Sparfield said. Each choir practices once a week and the concert choir practices two Saturdays a month.

Sparfield said most children stay in the choirs about 3½ to four years.

Holly and Courtney both say they've enjoyed being in the choirs and have improved their singing.

"This is my first year in concert. The music is harder and we are singing in more parts," Holly said. "But I like it a lot."

"The hardest song was 'Sleep, My Baby,'" Courtney said. "It's tricky. The words change from one verse to the other — but not much. So it's hard to remember the words sometimes."

For information about how to audition for the choirs, call 537-3150.