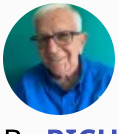
LOCAL NEWS • News

Rich Archbold: Get ready for a free Long Beach sing-along

From right, Long Beach Youth Chorus Executive Director Stan DeWitt and LB Youth Chorus Board Member Mary Barton pose for a photograph at Recreation Park in Long Beach on Wednesday, March 19, 2025. (Photo by Drew A. Kelley, Press-Telegram/SCNG)



By **RICH ARCHBOLD** | rarchbold@scng.com | Press-Telegram

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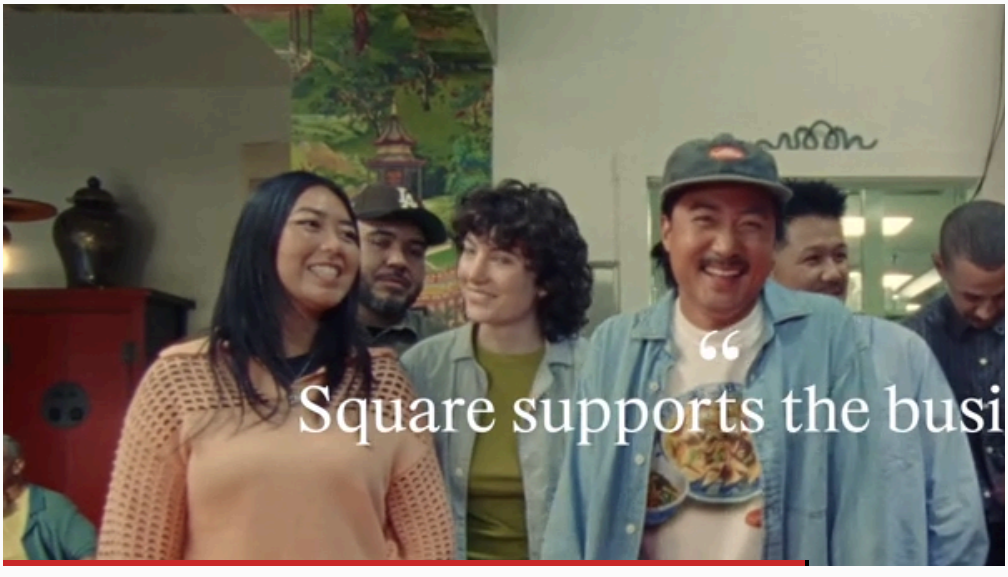
Bring your vocal chords and picnic basket to Recreation Park later this year and prepare to have a joyous and fun time during the first community-wide Long Beach sing-along concert.

We are giving you plenty of time to prepare for the event, so you can mark it on your calendar — and, of course, practice your singing. The “Sing-a-Long-Beach” will take place from 5 to 6:30 p.m. May 31 at the city’s Recreation Park Bandshell, at Seventh Street and Park Avenue.

And it’s free.

The singing event is the brainchild of Mary Barton, a community leader and singer, and musician Stan DeWitt, founder and executive director of the Long Beach Youth Chorus.



“I just wanted to do something that would bring people together,” said Barton, who is also a Youth Chorus board member. “Everybody loves singing so I talked to Stan about it and he agreed wholeheartedly.”

DeWitt, for his part, agreed about singing’s ability to unite.

“I’ve always loved that warm feeling of friendship when singing with others, whether it was in a choir or just around a campfire,” DeWitt said. “If you’ve sung in a church choir, school chorus, with your family or at summer camp,

This is a free chance to sing many well known songs, accompanied by a small band onstage and directed by DeWitt, who will also play the guitar.

The duo are selecting songs that inspire enthusiasm and love over wide genres, from standards and California songs to Broadway musicals and country songs, DeWitt said.

Some already selected songs, DeWitt said, include anthems like “We Are the Champions” and “We Will Rock You” by Queen, movie and Broadway songs like “Do-Re-Mi” from “The Sound of Music” and “Let It Go” from “Frozen,” and tunes about the state, such “California Dreamin’” by the Mamas & the Papas.

DeWitt also said if any choral group, like a church choir or high school chorus, was interested in leading the audience in one of the songs, they should email him at stan@longbeachyouthchorus.org.

Individuals with good voices should also contact DeWitt if they would like to be considered to lead the group in singing a song. Are you reading this, Mayor Rex Richardson? I heard you had a good voice.

Once all of the songs have been selected, their lyrics will be placed on the Long Beach Youth Chorus website — longbeachyouthchorus.org — so you can download them on your phone or print them out, DeWitt said.

While admission is free, attendees will be asked to pass the hat, with proceeds to be used for Youth Chorus operations and, particularly, to fund their touring budget, he said.

Both Barton and DeWitt have deep musical backgrounds.

Barton was born and raised in Lincoln, Nebraska, where she sang in the church choir.

“I learned to play the piano from my mother,” she said, “and I play the piano every day.”

She also sang with the Golden Sands Chorus of Long Beach, a chapter of Sweet Adelines International, a worldwide organization of women singers.

DeWitt, meanwhile, sang, learned to play the guitar and started writing his own songs as a teenager.

DeWitt started the Youth Chorus in 2017 “to provide a new activity for youngsters whose lives might go astray or at least into video-game oblivion,” he said.

About 50 youngsters, from 7 to 18, comprise several ensembles. The children and teens learn to read music, interpret many kinds of songs and perform for an audience.

“The poise they gain is remarkable, and their sound is like magic,” Barton said. “The young singers amaze their audiences.”

In an interesting coincidence, Barton and DeWitt lived only about 10 minutes apart in Long Beach for years without knowing each other — and then they discovered through DNA results that they were related.

DeWitt was born in Denver in 1963, but was put up for adoption by his mother. He was raised by another family and never knew his mother until he found her through DNA testing.

His DNA results in 2021 showed other people he was related to and, as he wrote in his autobiography:

“There was the bombshell: a first cousin once-removed who lived in Long Beach, California, my city.”

He looked up the name and it was Barton. It turns out they were related on his father’s side.

“When I called her on the phone, one of the first questions I asked her was if anyone in her family was musical,” DeWitt said. “She laughed in the affirmative.”

Barton got on the Youth Chorus’ Board of Directors and is now working with DeWitt on the Sing-a-Long-Beach.

“It’s a small world,” Barton said.

Also working with them is a steering committee consisting of Tish Camp, president of Camerata Singers; Marcelle Epley, CEO of the Long Beach Community Foundation; THird District Councilmember Kristina Duggan; Marc Davidson, secretary of the Long Beach Arts Council; Richard Brown, a

I am also involved.

I'm the honorary chair of this talented group and am happy to help them with this first city sing-along. I love to sing and will be there at the Bandshell, chiming in with everyone else.

You should also join us — for what should be an enjoyable, fun and melodic time.

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Tuesday, June 2

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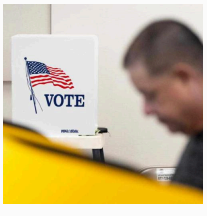
Thursday, June 4



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Tuesday, June 2

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Friday, June 5

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Friday, June 5

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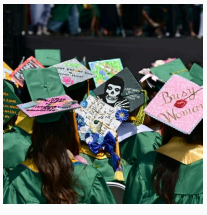
Sunday, June 7



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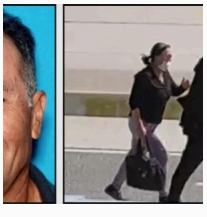
Monday, June 8



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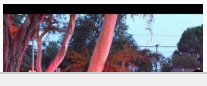

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Monday, June 8

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23