

ENCORE EXTRA

July 2025



Celebrating Creativity for Older Adults Since 2007

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A LETTER FROM OUR CEO



Hello!

I'm writing this as I listen to some great Motown music at our camp in Detroit—we're having a blast! If you've never joined us for a tour or trip, please consider it in the future. It's a wonderful way to meet new friends, explore a city, and make great music together.

Our summer singing sessions have been going really well, and we're thrilled with participation levels. We've also launched pilot chorales in Pasadena, CA and Williamsburg, VA, and both groups have had a wonderful time gathering with new friends and excellent conductors. Singing is good for our hearts, brains, and bodies, and I hope you'll consider joining us for our fall season. You'll receive your rehearsal schedule, performance schedule, and complete repertoire list.

Encore has worked hard to keep costs affordable and accessible—we haven't raised registration fees since 2018. As we remain committed to this organization-wide, we're offering options to help offset rising costs by adding value to your program or making a donation to support our efforts.

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It takes incredible generosity to sustain our \$2.5 million organization and keep as many people singing as possible. I'm grateful in advance if you choose to participate in the upcoming registration.

In September, we'll launch tickets for our Annual Celebration Brunch on October 18th and host our annual State of the Encore. This is my opportunity to share company updates on finances, participation numbers, and our strategic plan—part of our ongoing commitment to transparency.

What a joy it is to be part of Encore! I look forward to seeing many of you in Ireland, Chautauqua, or at our upcoming fall rehearsals. Until then!

Joshua Vickery

Chief Executive Officer, Encore Creativity for Older Adults



**REGISTRATION FOR
THE FALL 2025
SEMESTER IS OPEN!**

[REGISTER HERE](#)

PILOTS OVERVIEW

Encore Chorale of Pasadena

The Encore Chorale of Pasadena is a 6-week pilot program in collaboration with Pasadena Village. Under the direction of Holly Barber, this program offers a unique opportunity for adults to engage in community music-making without the pressure of a final performance.



Holly Barber



[**REGISTER**](#)

Williamsburg ROCKS

Williamsburg ROCKS is a 6-week pilot program in partnership with Williamsburg Landing. Under the direction of Rebecca Gardner, this program invites adults to enjoy high-energy music-making in a relaxed, no-performance setting. Tuition is fully sponsored by Williamsburg Landing—join us for great music, new friendships, and a fun way to kick off your summer!



Rebecca Gardner

[**REGISTER**](#)

Encore's Pilot programs are designed for singers of all experience levels, providing a relaxed environment to enjoy music-making, build friendships, and learn new repertoire. Please note that there will be no final performance; the focus is on the joy of singing and community engagement.

[**LEARN MORE ABOUT PILOTS**](#)



A NOTE FROM KATHRYN HARSHA

Summertime... and the livin' is easy...

Aaaaah, summer. The season of watermelon, outdoor strolls, flower gardens, and ice cream. The opportunity for life's patterns to be just a bit... different. A chance to literally stop and smell the flowers. The warmer weather is definitely an excuse to eat more ice cream (dark chocolate gelato for me, please), and a more flexible schedule entices us to explore new corners of the world.

Does your summer include any new music? Perhaps a chance to sing a different style of music than you're used to - maybe Broadway tunes, Motown hits, or singing a cappella, without any accompaniment. Perhaps you're meeting new friends and singing in a new place, like Detroit, Dublin, or Chautauqua. Wherever you are, and whatever music accompanies you, I hope your summer provides opportunities to reconnect and recharge.

Already this summer, the team at Encore is preparing for the fall semester, and can't wait to welcome you back to "regular" rehearsals! As the days grow shorter and the pace begins to pick up again, remember that music doesn't take a vacation—it simply changes its venue. Whether you're humming along to the radio on a road trip, joining a beach bonfire sing-along, or discovering a new favorite song on your summer playlist, let the music be your companion. And when the fall arrives and we gather again, you'll bring with you all the melodies, memories, and renewed energy that only a summer well-lived can provide. Until then, keep singing!

-Kathryn Harsha

Artistic Director for Programming



REGISTRATION FOR THE FALL 2025 SEMESTER IS OPEN!

[REGISTER HERE](#)

THANK YOU FOR JOINING ENCORE AT WASHINGTON COLLEGE!

A heartfelt thank you to all our singers (and guests!) who made last month's Encore camp in Chestertown a bright and harmonious success. From rockers to choral lovers, your enthusiasm and beautiful voices truly lit up the halls during our free culminating performance. We hope you're carrying that joy—and new friendships—into the summer!





THE ENCORE EFFECT: TRANSFORMING LIVES THROUGH SONG

ENCORE CREATIVITY'S NEWEST PODCAST

Discover the powerful role of music in life's second act.

The Encore Effect shares inspiring stories from Encore singers and expert insights from the fields of neuroscience, gerontology, and the arts.



WHAT TO EXPECT?

Find out how music creates community, improves health and brings joy to thousands of older adults.

GET READY TO TUNE IN SOON!

SPOTLIGHT ON ENCORE CHORALE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY

This month, we're thrilled to feature the Encore Chorale Prince George's County, a vibrant new ensemble conducted by Dr. Edryn Coleman. Launched on March 27 as a pilot under the Encore Creativity for Older Adults umbrella, this Prince George's County chorale quickly blossomed into a fulltime ensemble in partnership with Prince George's Community College. What sets this group apart is its exclusive registration through the SAGE (Seasoned Adults Growing Educationally) program —unlike other Encore chorales, singers must sign up via SAGE to participate. For more information, please visit encorecreativity.org/encore-chorales. The Encore Chorale Prince George's County is ready to welcome you!



SUMMER SERIES





ARTISTIC MASTERCLASSES

Encore University's July Artistic Masterclass

Join Us for our July Session!

Unleash Play: Improv for Laughter and Insight with Topher Bellavia
Wednesday, July 23 7:30-9:00pm EST on Zoom

We improvise our lives every day. Practicing improv helps us see more possibilities, listen actively, and build trust through agreement and positivity. “Yes, and” teaches us to support ideas and collaborate more freely and flexibly.

Improv also gives us rare permission to play—boosting brain health, sparking creativity, and inviting laughter. In this Masterclass, we’ll explore why things are funny, examine the structures behind humor, and play games that bring joy and insight.



Topher Bellavia helped launch Washington Improv Theater’s celebrated Training Program and has performed, directed, and taught improvisational theater for over two decades. A three-time champion of the Fighting Improv Smackdown Tournament, he has appeared on stages nationwide, including the Chicago Improv Festival, Seattle Festival of Improvised Theatre, and NYC’s Del Close Marathon with his ensemble onesixtyone.

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ARTISTIC MASTERCLASSES

As a teacher of improv characters, he's coached hundreds and taught thousands to tell truthful, compelling stories that inspire action.

As a creative collaborator, Topher is a member of WITfilms, a multidisciplinary ensemble whose short films—including the nationally awarded Multiverse—have earned acclaim from the 48 Hour Film Project and beyond. His true story of resilience after a house fire was featured in Story District's "Top Shelf," and he produced the comedy/variety series The Charlie Visconage Show. He's brought improv principles to corporate and government clients—including PayPal, Deloitte, USAID, and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children—using the "Yes, and" philosophy to strengthen team communication, creativity, and trust. In collaboration with FEMA, he designed a disaster-response simulation program to boost team readiness and agile problem-solving.

Topher holds a dual degree in Theatre and American Government from Wesleyan University, where he graduated with honors and gave a senior address excerpted by The New York Times and NBC Nightly News. Through his company, Only Connect, he coaches artists and professionals in truthful storytelling and fearless collaboration.

REGISTER FOR 7/23



ARTISTIC MASTERCLASSES

Encore University's Artistic Masterclasses

Join Us for Upcoming Sessions!

Introduction to Tai Chi - Nick Gracenin

Date: Wednesday, August 13 7:30-9:00pm EST on Zoom

Introduction to Sight Singing and Solfege - Kathryn Harsha
and Mary Ann East

Date: Wednesday, September 10 7:30-9:00pm EST on Zoom

Poets of our Fall Repertoire - Dr. Grace Sikorski

Date: To be determined.



A NOTE FROM MARY ANN EAST

The summer is flying by! I had the JOY of supporting the Washington College Camp at the end of June. There was so much music, movement, and most importantly, laughter! From movement sessions and singing with Joey and Louise, a relaxing river cruise, to getting to know others while sharing meals together; I feel very lucky to be part of the Encore family.

Speaking of family, I just put up our family July-August calendar and surprise, there was the start of school and fall Encore semester on August 18! Until then, it's so exciting to see the health benefits of music highlighted in so many different platforms. If you missed them, you can find them here (and I'm sure there are more):

[They sing to remember: The power of memory choirs | National Geographic](#)

[Why making music is good for your brain, even if you aren't good at it | The Washington Post](#) (paywall here)

[How does music enhance overall health and well-being | Deseret News](#)
(orchestral music)

We are grateful that you see the value in singing with Encore. Enjoy the rest of the summer singing sessions, trips and camps.

UPCOMING ARTS AND HEALTH RESEARCH MASTERCLASSES

Right to Music - Dan Cohen

Date: Monday, July 21 7:30-9:00pm EST on Zoom

Melodies That Matter: Improving Lives with Music for You and Your Loved Ones Affected by Dementia

Two-thirds of Americans say that music is important to their mental health and well-being. What is it about music that we find so beneficial? Most of us have had first-hand experience with family and friends with dementia. How can we best utilize music to make a difference? During our MasterClass you will learn 15 ways that music can improve quality of life and the optimal approaches we can take to support anyone who is important to us regardless of their cognitive or physical state.



To better understand Dan's work, please take a moment prior to the masterclass to watch the 78-minute Sundance Audience Award-Winning Documentary, *Alive Inside*, which is available to watch for free on YouTube (*Alive Inside* can also be viewed on Amazon Prime and Apple TV).

ARTS & HEALTH RESEARCH
MASTERCLASSES

You are Cordially Invited to Our

ANNUAL CELEBRATION BRUNCH

Join Encore Creativity for awards, performances,
and great food alongside your fellow singers as we
celebrate our Encore year and raise support in our
mission!

.....

SATURDAY

OCTOBER 18 @ 11:30AM

.....

The Mayflower DC

1127 Connecticut Ave NW, Washington, DC 20036

TICKETS ON SALE SEPTEMBER 1st!

In-Person Tickets: \$75

Livestream Tickets: \$25

<https://encorecreativity.org/celebration>



ENCORE SPOTLIGHT

Angela Burns

Director of Encore Chorale Cape Fear

Interview conducted by Howard Gradet

Angela is the director of Encore Chorale Cape Fear (NC) and the Sentimental Journey Singers Wilmington, NC.

Angela loves working with volunteer choirs, and when a current church choir member and board member of her professional choir, Wilmington Voices, asked her to consider leading the new Encore Chorale Cape Fear, she jumped at the chance: the idea of working with a senior chorus intrigued her.

Angela grew up in Wilmington, NC. She left Wilmington for undergraduate school at East Carolina University, majoring in Vocal Pedagogy/Vocal Performance. Upon completion of her Bachelor's, she began teaching private voice and piano, along with junior high school music.

In 1994, six months after beginning teaching junior high, she joined the Singing Sergeants, the official Air Force chorus. She has sung for Presidents Bush, Carter, Clinton and Obama, and at Presidents Ford and Reagan's funerals. During her career with the Singing Sergeants, she was made conductor and then Chief/Manager. She left the Singing Sergeants in 2016, retiring to North Carolina to be closer to family.

She continues to sing nationally with professional choirs such as Conspirare, and has created a professional choir in Wilmington.



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Music became a lifeline for Angela at a very early age. She firmly believes that she wouldn't have graduated without having music in her life. "It is a literal extension of my body. When I'm not able to make music for whatever reasons (such as illness), it's like losing an appendage."

She knows that making music is a form of expression. Working with memory-challenged singers, she has witnessed first-hand how music reaches an individual and allows them to express themselves. When her grandmother was diagnosed with Alzheimer's, it was through music that Angela was able to continue to connect with her. The Sentimental Journey Singers ensemble continues to grow and surprise her at every rehearsal. "They have really embraced one another, and gather even when we aren't in session. I couldn't be more proud of them!...It's as if a light switch is turned on, and their eyes are alive!"

Angela's goal for her Encore singers is simple: she wants them to have fun. She wants them to enjoy what they're doing, and enjoy those around them. She reminds the Chorale that the ensemble they are singing in is special because they will never sound as good as they do when they are singing together. And she pushes them a little because she wants them to know they're supported, and that she believes in their talents and gifts.

Angela lives in Wilmington with her husband Cory and their dog Lily Rose. Her step-daughter, Mikayla, is in the Air Force, working on spy planes. Angela is a professional singer and conductor, currently performing in and conducting five different choirs. She and Cory love to travel, go to the beach (they live on the coast), hike, garden, and hang out with like-minded people.

She has many proud moments with the Encore Chorale, highlighted by the time that they kept going while the accompanist tried to find their place in the music. It all worked out, though for a few pages it sounded like Charles Ives.

Angela loves being part of Encore because "we're a family now." She enjoys getting to know each of the singers on a personal level. Again...connection. They are a loving, resilient group of people. It's the kind of group I want to sing in once I stop leading other ensembles."

SAVE THE DATE



Town Hall

July Town Hall

July 17 at 4:30 p.m. EST

Join our monthly Town Hall for all the latest news about Encore.

[JOIN ZOOM](#)



New Member Orientation

New Member Orientation

July 23, 2025, 4:00 p.m. EST

Learn more about Encore's upcoming Fall semester!

[JOIN ZOOM](#)

Chautauqua Institute

August 24-29, 2025

[MORE INFO](#)

[REGISTER](#)



Roadmap of Events 2025-2026

Roadmap of Events '25-'26

September 11th, 2025 EST

Save the date!



State of Encore

State of Encore

September 25 @ 4:30 PM EST

Get a behind-the-scenes look at Encore's annual report.

[JOIN ZOOM](#)

ENCORE EXCHANGE

Where Voices Meet Repertoire

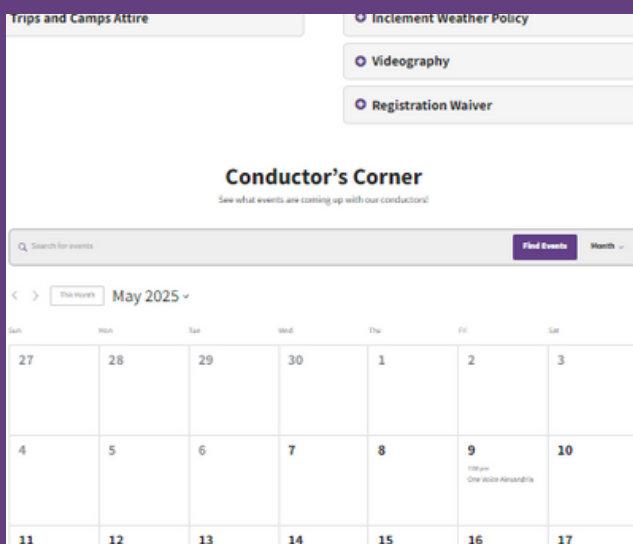
Encore Exchange is a new forum for singers to dive deeper into the music we perform. Each month, we'll gather to talk about our current and upcoming repertoire: why it was chosen, what makes it meaningful or challenging, and how it resonates with us as performers. It's a space for open conversation, reflection, and collaborative feedback across semesters.

What pieces have grown on you? What would you love to explore next? Bring your thoughts, your voice, and your curiosity.

Join us at the next Encore Exchange — and be part of the conversation behind the music.

- **Monday, July 21 | 4:30–5:30 PM EST**
- **Wednesday, August 20 | 4:30-5:30 PM EST** *Sacred and Secular: Finding Common Ground in Choral Music*
- **Wednesday, September 3 | 4:30-5:30 PM EST** *Rocks repertoire with Jeff Dokken*

[ZOOM LINK](#)



CONDUCTOR'S CORNER

Ever wonder what your Encore conductors are up to outside of rehearsals? Visit the [Singer's Page](#) to explore a calendar of upcoming concerts, performances, and events featuring Encore's talented conductors!

[SINGERS PAGE](#)

WELCOME TO ENCORE'S NEWEST LEADERS!

We're thrilled to introduce the newest additions to Encore Creativity for Older Adults' leadership who will assist in guiding our organization into a bright, musical future!

Board Members:

Jessica Fredericksen

Suzanne LaFollette-Black

Barbara Male

Pat Polansky

Ken Weeman



Conductors:

Shannon Arnold (*Encore Chorale Arlington*)

Holly Barber (*Encore Chorale Pasadena*)

Rebecca Gardner (*ROCKS Williamsburg*)

Susan Stedman (*Encore Melody Makers Chapel Hill*)



Please join me in extending a warm welcome to our new staff members and here's to a future filled with music, joy and connection at Encore!

ENCORE CREATIVITY AWARDED NEW GRANTS TO SUPPORT ALEXANDRIA AND ANNAPOLIS CHORALES

Encore Creativity is proud to announce two new grants supporting our mission to provide exceptional choral experiences for older adults.

We are honored to receive an \$11,000 grant from the City of Alexandria through the 2026 Annual Arts Program Grant to support our work in Alexandria. For over 30 years, Alexandria has championed the arts by funding organizations, artists, and service providers who enrich the cultural life of the community.



Additionally, we are grateful to the Community Foundation of Anne Arundel County (CFAAC) for awarding a \$20,000 grant in support of expanding new programming in Anne Arundel County. CFAAC's commitment to connecting people who care with causes that matter continues to make a lasting impact across the region.

Encore Creativity sincerely thanks both organizations for their generous support of our singers and our mission.



ENCORE CREATIVITY TO BE FEATURED ON SENIOR PLANET'S WELLNESS WEDNESDAY!

Encore Creativity is excited to partner with Senior Planet from AARP for an upcoming Wellness Wednesday session on Wednesday, July 24 at 3pm ET. This free, virtual event is titled “Unlocking the Power of Music for Older Adults” and will explore how music can support brain health, boost mood, and foster meaningful connection in our later years.

Encore's CEO, Joshua Vickery, will be the featured guest speaker, sharing insights from his extensive career in arts and aging, as well as the impact Encore's programs have on thousands of older adults nationwide. We're honored to be part of this meaningful conversation and hope you'll join us for what promises to be an uplifting and informative session.

Wellness Wednesday – Unlocking the Power of Music for Older Adults

Wednesday, July 23 | 1:30 PM ET

[**LEARN MORE AND VIEW EVENT**](#)



SENIOR PLANET
FROM AARP

Wellness Wednesday 

**Unlocking the Power of
Music for Older Adults**



Guest Presenter
Joshua Vickery
CEO, Encore Creativity



DONOR SPOTLIGHT

Jamie Wooten

I grew up in rural Eastern North Carolina, working in the tobacco fields. Music was my escape, and eventually, my way out. High School Chorus, Marching Band, Governors School of North Carolina in Choral Music, then three days after graduation I moved to the West Coast to travel the world with the choral music group The Young Americans. And to make a living, I did any job that paid you to sing: Singing waiter (in 3 different states!), singing telegrams, professional Dickens Christmas Caroler (yes, that's a thing), and ended up doing a long run as a Cruise Director on Princess Cruises. Not as glamorous as it sounds - you spent all day dealing with difficult passengers, and at night you performed in all of the shows. Stressful and exhausting. All these decades and many therapy bills later, I can proudly say that I am almost recovered from that experience, although asking me to teach you how to play shuffleboard could probably still send me over the edge. After disembarking for the final time, I still had enough ambition left that I did a couple of National Bus & Truck Tours, and I finally got to achieve my original dream - performing on Broadway. A total thrill!



CONTINUED —————→

After that, I left music behind for another path. Through a series of miracles and lucky breaks, I began a 20+ year career as a writer/producer in Hollywood. I worked on 400 episodes of television - all sitcoms. And I was fortunate enough to be one of the writers and producers of the hit TV comedy, "The Golden Girls". How cool is that?! I got to work with Bea, Rue, Estelle and the deliciously dirty-minded Betty White every day for years. I co-wrote many episodes, including Dorothy and Sophia performing as Sonny & Cher, Sophia running off to become a nun, and my favorite, Blanche and Dorothy fighting to be the queen of the Rusty Anchor Bar, complete with Blanche's disastrous attempt at performing on top of the grand piano. What a blast we had doing that series! Having talked recently with my fellow writers, we are astounded and grateful for our show's longevity. Thank you all for watching all these years. Oh, and there's a big 40th (!) Anniversary Special coming up on ABC this September!

Once my hair started to turn gray, I retired from Hollywood and chased a new dream - being a playwright. With my partners Jessie Jones and Nicholas Hope, we formed a playwriting trio whose plays took off quickly.: Jones Hope Wooten. 27 published plays later, our comedies have been performed thousands of times in all 50 states and we just booked our 24th country - opening in Prague in the Czech Republic next spring. As we always say, 'Life Is Better When You're Laughing'!

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Every writer knows that any interesting story has an unexpected twist, and here's mine. A year and a half ago, while on vacation on the island of Kauai, my amazing and perfectly healthy partner for 30 years collapsed and died unexpectedly and instantly while walking beside me from the beach. I was in total shock and my grief was immense. But get this: just 3 days prior to that event, my husband Nick had turned to me out of the blue and stated strongly and plainly, "You should go back to your music". I still have no idea where that came from. It just wasn't a topic we had discussed. But eventually I realized it was said for a reason - to help me get through this loss. So I did what he said - I went back to my music.

So when I was able to try, I attended a few rehearsals of a different DC choral group, but it wasn't the right fit. Then, one evening on a Metro platform, the intrepid Mary Padgett handed me an Encore business card and said 'Come sing with us'. See? It works, people! I joined the DC Chorale, and was welcomed into the group warmly and immediately. (although I'm not fooling myself - I'm a male first tenor. Y'all did everything but bring me a nice cup of tea and a seat cushion upon my arrival - very sweet!) I decided not to tell anyone about my loss because I needed a space where I could get away from my sadness at least once a week and just embrace the joy of music and friendship. And I do admit it took me many rehearsals to get through 'Like A River In My Soul' without choking up. But the truth is this: Music - and all of you - saved me.

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We never really know what kind of journey any of our fellow singers might be on, but the camaraderie in the rehearsal room gives us all something to lean on.

Reading this will be the first time any of my Chorale and Rocks families will know any of this about me. So I want to thank all of you for helping me heal just through your kindness and generosity of spirit - even if you had no idea the gift you were giving me. I am certain I am not the only singer who has benefited from Encore in this way. Everyone has their own reasons for walking through that door for the first time. Now you know mine.

All of which led me to being a donor to Encore Creativity. I wanted to find a way to give back to my groups for what they had done for me, and - thanks to Josh and his own creativity - together we came up with a unique way for me to contribute: Since our DC Chorale rehearsal venue was by far the most expensive of the lot, and that this cost was weighing heavily on Josh, I offered to take that worry away by fully funding all the rehearsal expenses for the DC Chorale for the next 5 years, with money left over for DC Rocks. It's just a win-win for everyone. And my point in participating in this article is to state that it's okay for donors to think outside the box. There are many ways to help this incredible organization flourish. So please, give 'creatively' to Encore Creativity. I am proof positive that you never know how powerful or impactful your financial gift can be -

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you can help others 'go back to their music'. Believe me, joy is waiting for all in these rehearsal spaces and within the pages of these choral arrangements.

So thank you, Nick. You were right, as usual. And again, thank you, everybody. I promise to continue to donate to Encore as long as you all promise to hold up your end of the 'no shuffleboard' thing. Deal? :)

Stay Golden!

Jamie Wooten

Tenor, DC Chorale & DC Rocks



SUPPORT ENCORE —————>

SIX SIMPLE WAYS TO SUPPORT ENCORE



Monthly Giving



Employer Match



Community Fund



Gift in Honor



IRA MRD



Stock

SHAPE ENCORE'S FUTURE WITH A LEGACY GIFT

Legacy giving ensures the music continues for decades to come!

Encore's Legacy Circle is the special recognition of those who have designated gifts to Encore via their will, living trust, or another part of their estate plan.

Did you know that you can help someone find joy and community through music? When you support Encore, you do just that. Your gift makes a difference in the lives of Encore singers. Give monthly, quarterly, or through a legacy gift in your estate plan.

Gifts of All Sizes Make a Difference!

[More Information](#)

If you have included Encore in your estate plan, please reach out to joshua@encorecreativity.org for inclusion and recognition in Encore's concert programs!

SPONSORS

Thank You to Our Sponsors and Funders



The John A. Hartford Foundation



LOWER CAPE FEAR
LifeCare



NEW HANOVER COUNTY
SENIOR RESOURCE CENTER



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