

# Handbell Choir *brings Music* to retirement community

## Longtime director makes good use of donated instruments

By Nicole Skinner  
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**M**usic-wise, there's something special about the handbell.

You may have heard their beautiful, rich tones in a church or at a community concert.

Playing them can be a challenge, and often requires a skilled director, plus a lot of space to practice. Which is why some churches that have invested in the instruments over the years sometimes end up placing them in storage.

This is what happened with Spokane's Our Savior Lutheran Church, which closed its doors in 2005 but wasn't sure what to do with its set of Malmark handbells.



Photo by Nicole Skinner, Marketing Correspondent

One of the available activities at Riverview Retirement Community is a handbell choir, directed by a resident who directed these type of ensembles for 40 years.

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Church officials offered them to Riverview Retirement Community, which fortunately had an experienced director who was willing to recruit a group of ringers and create the community's first handbell choir.

Resident Lois Iller put together an 11-member choir that fall. Each member receives two handbells. Some volunteers had musical training in their backgrounds; and others were complete novices.

But with Lois' philosophy of "if you can count to four, I can teach you to ring handbells," the choir has learned and flourished rapidly.

Now they've even added a second choir due to the high interest in playing these wonderful instruments.

Iller brings a lifetime of musical talents, including directing handbell choirs for around 40 years.

After graduating college with music and education degrees, her career spanned elementary through university levels. She also was a flutist in the Spokane Symphony orchestra for 16 years.

Her goals for the two Riverview Ringers Handbell Choirs are to develop challenging

musical experiences for the ringers and to provide pleasure for the residents of the Riverview community.

**Each month the choir learns two new numbers to perform. The choir meets once a week for an hour-long practice, then performs at the monthly at the community meetings.**

*"Music expresses feelings and thoughts without language. Without music, life would be a mistake," Iller said.*

In addition to the handbells, the choir has a three-octave set of handchimes thanks to a generous donation by a group of friends within the community. There is even a resident composer at Riverview that writes original compositions for the choir to perform.

Iller said she genuinely loves music and her choirs. It's a way to connect with other people.

"Music expresses feelings and thoughts without language. Without music, life would be a mistake," she said.

***For more information about Riverview Retirement Community visit [riverviewretirement.org](http://riverviewretirement.org) or call (509)483-6483.***

