Nursing Prof Harmonizes Passion for Singing With Public Health Education

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In the 1980s, UA College of Nursing professor Ted Rigney attended the University of Southern California in hopes of becoming a professional performer.

While working sporadically as a singer in Los Angeles, Rigney performed in many showcases and auditioned "whenever and wherever they would let me open my mouth," he jokes.

After two years in Los Angeles, he realized things needed to change when he found himself working as a singer/waiter.

Those days are well behind him.

When Rigney returned to Arizona, he got involved with The Shanti Project, an organization that provides emotional and practical support for people with life-threatening illnesses, with a special focus on AIDS. Working within Shanti, he found an overwhelming passion for health care.

He moved to San Francisco and worked in hospice care while obtaining an associate's degree in nursing. He since has earned multiple degrees including his doctorate from the UA College of Nursing as well as recognition for his work.

However, his passion for singing never abated. When he returned to Tucson nearly 10 years ago, he sought out a community chorus, mainly to meet and connect with new friends. His search brought him to Reveille Men's Chorus. Reveille was founded in 1995 as a gay men's community chorus and has since transformed itself into a community institution of seasoned performers with an added public health focus on HIV/AIDS awareness, education and prevention.

Rigney has traveled with Reveille to Mexico, Canada and Brazil to perform fundraising concerts and to provide health education literature and condoms for local health care organizations. Each member of Reveille pays his own expenses. On Reveille's three-city tour in Brazil, nearly all of the giveaway items the chorus members took with them were gone after the first performance.

"Being a part of Reveille has been an incredible experience," Rigney says. One of his favorite experiences was in Rio de Janeiro, where the chorus performed a concert in one of the favelas, or slums, surrounding Rio.
“There were people literally hanging from the ceiling, wanting to know more about what we represented,” he says. The concerts usually were an introduction to more in-depth health outreach.

Reveille also has strong connections in Tucson. It provides outreach and fundraising to numerous organizations, including the Southern Arizona AIDS Foundation [3] and Tucson Interfaith HIV/AIDS Network [4], known as TIHAN. The chorus gave a percentage of the proceeds from its holiday concert to the Eon Youth Group, which is a part of Wingspan [5].

Rigney and Reveille have a show coming up in early May at the Temple of Music and Art. Tickets and information can be found at www.reveillemenschorus.org [6]. Reveille also can be followed on Facebook and Twitter.

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