

A COMMUNITY VICTORY IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

Washington, D.C., Region members put on a recital, 'Peace Begins With Me,' inviting their friends from the community to join in.

They prepared for months, rehearsing nights and weekends, struggling as they refined harmonies and pored over pronunciation (particularly for a Stevie Wonder tune to be sung in Spanish *and* Zulu). Dec. 20, 1998, was supposed to be the day that the Washington, D.C., Region Chorus would dazzle their guests at their annual recital, this year titled "Peace Begins With Me," to be held at the Publick Playhouse in Cheverly, Md.

Instead, the recital became the first public activity for the region in 1999, the Year of Victory in the Community. A gas leak at the Playhouse on Dec. 19 forced the performance to be rescheduled for Jan. 30. Then, as the weather grew colder, bringing snow and ice storms, some chorus members became sick with throat and bronchial ailments. Maintaining the enthusiasm that had fueled their progress in December became an issue.

While she felt "sad" after the December cancellation, 10-year-old Channi Murray said she prayed sincerely for the performers to "get through the show without any accidents." Channi said she learned that "if you chant a lot, you can begin to accomplish your dreams."

Nathalie Wells overcame physical challenges to perform. At age 77, she feared the arthritis in her knees and lower back would force her to stay home. "The encouragement of the other chorus members enabled me to keep coming out," she said, "and after the performance, I felt fine."

The day of the show, each participating member was given a copy of the SGI president's calligraphy for "Victory in the Community." Encouraged and energized, the group went on to give their very best to the 300 assembled SGI members, family members and guests. Victory was theirs!

— CAROL CHASTANG