



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

The Aptos Madrigal Choir has been chosen to perform at Lincoln Center in New York.

Next stop, New York

Aptos High choir needs \$10,000 for April trip

By TRACY L. BARNETT
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APTOS — If you see a middle-aged, brown-haired, respectable-looking high school registrar sitting at the side of the highway with a sign in her hands pleading for money, don't be alarmed.

It's just Janet McDonald, trying to raise the last \$10,000 the Aptos Madrigal Choir needs to make a trip to New York to perform at Lincoln Center. The group had a deadline of this Friday to secure their space, but was able to finagle a week's extension.

"It was hard to get the news out to the public that this is happening," said a weary McDonald, who is coordinating the fund-raising for the group. "So many people I was hoping to hear from haven't called. ... I don't know what to do anymore. Do I stand out on the freeway with a cardboard sign and say, do you want to donate \$10?"

The choir was selected as one of 14

around the world to perform at the New York International Choral Festival on April 24 and 25, and members have been fund-raising furiously ever since. Thanks to the generosity of local residents and corporate donors such as Marc Monte, Granite Rock and the Seaside Co., the choir has managed to raise nearly \$40,000 to send the 43 vocalists on their way.

But their last major fund-raiser, a benefit performance by local pianist Nicki Petruzella Kerns, fell far short of the \$4,000 they hoped to raise, and hoped-for donations have not materialized.

The group's selection for the performance was a fluke, and choir director Meri Pezzoni still can hardly believe it happened. The group performed on the Monterey Jazz Festival Cruise last summer and caught the eye of Bill Lutt of World Projects, a Berkeley nonprofit that promotes arts groups.

He pulled her aside and told her,

"Your group is fabulous. Do you have a large concert choir? I have an international festival to tell you about," Pezzoni said. "At first I thought it was a bit monumental to consider going up against other groups from international known venues, but I decided what the heck. I'll send them a tape, and we'll see what happens."

What happened was that the group's tape won out over those of scores of other groups around the world — and Pezzoni was faced with raising \$45,000. That was in addition to the more than \$18,000 she and the choir raise every year to support the program, because the district does not fund music programs, and the group must cover all its own expenses.

If you would like to contribute to the group's fund-raising effort, contact McDonald at 688-6565 Ext. 244, or send a check payable to the Aptos High School Madrigal Choir to Aptos High School, 7301 Freedom Blvd., Aptos, Calif. 95003.