

New CDs from men's schools offers comfort and joy

St. Joseph, Cockeysville, parishioner Brian Sahm thought his \$15 was well spent when he bought the Calvert Hall Hallmen's new Christmas CD.

Mr. Sahm had listened to a performance of the Calvert Hall College High School, Towson, students during a Christmas open house and bazaar at the Monsignor O'Dwyer Retreat House, Sparks.

The young men's group received rave reviews for their melodies, said O'Dwyer's director of development, Bernadette Moyer.

"They were excellent and very well received," she said.

Under the direction of Rich Skirpan, "Comfort & Joy" includes 16 carols - some that everyone knows, and a few new Christmas songs, he said. One new piece is about the shepherds' experience meeting baby Jesus. A hidden "surprise" after the last song is the school's Alma Mater.

Mr. Skirpan is hoping the CD, which features styles from Gregorian chant to vocal jazz, "will put people into the Christmas spirit; something they will enjoy playing as background music for their Christmas parties or to give as gifts."

The CD was produced as a fundraiser for a school trip this year to a music festival in New York City.

"Making Christmas CDs to use as trip fundraisers was something we did in college when I was a member of the Duquesne University Chamber Singers," said Mr. Skirpan. "Since arriving at Calvert Hall in 2004, it's been my goal to get the Hallmen recording."

Recording sessions can be grueling for the singers and the conductor, he said, yet they help build musical stamina and professionalism.

The group recorded the CD in two days at St. Mary Magdalen, mission of St.

Margaret, Bel Air, in “a wonderful ... quite reverberant ... room in which to record choral music,” Mr. Skirpan said.

Mr. Skirpan is also the choirmaster at Church of the Nativity, Timonium, and saw the recording session as a nice opportunity to bring together talented musicians. He acknowledged Michael Britt, music director of St. Margaret’s; Al Walsh and Andrew Stewart of Nativity’s house band; and Douglas Barclay of Shrine of the Sacred Heart, Mount Washington.

Curley ensembles record live

Simultaneously, the music program at Archbishop Curley High School, Baltimore, continues to do great things, said associate director for advancement, Jeremy Joseph.

Archbishop Curley’s four performing ensembles released their first CD Dec. 9, “An Evening with the Archbishop Curley Choral and Handbell Ensembles,” a recording made during the spring concert.

The four ensembles include the 80-member Curley Choir, the Curley Schola, the Luminare Choir, and the Curley Ringers (handbells).

Carol Winpigler, founding director of the Curley Choir, is the school’s choirmaster and chairwoman of the fine arts department. Michael Gaffney directs the choir.

Glenn Workman, Dave Makowiecki (class of 1993), and Matthew Sunday (class of 1999) were responsible for recording, mastering and production details.

The Curley Choir has performed at the Meyerhoff Symphony Hall with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra; the University of Maryland at Baltimore, and the Baltimore Convention Center.

The Archbishop Curley CDs may be purchased for \$20 at choral performances, in the campus store, or online through the bookstore, www.archbishopcurley.org.

The Calvert Hall CDs are available in the Calvert Hall Cardinal Shop for \$15 plus postage. Call 410-825-4266 x138 or visit the Cardinal Shop online,

www.calverthall.com/cardinalshop.