



SUE HOUSTON at the piano in her Bricklanding home.

STAFF PHOTO BY LYNN CARLSON

Keep On Singing

BY LYNN CARLSON

Sue Houston knows a little about "Kismet," the Turkish word for "fate." It's not just the name of the upcoming Brunswick Little Theatre musical of which she is vocal director. It's why she's learning to cope with life on her own when it was supposed to be time to relax and play golf with her beloved husband William.

Shortly after the Houstons moved here from Pennsylvania 3½ years ago to retire and build a home, William, a former General Electric engineer, fell ill. Plans for the house were canceled, and he died in December 1992.

Since then Sue has devoted herself to "learning to stand on my own two feet. It isn't easy."

Part of the healing strategy is to sing through the pain. Houston, who went back to college a few years ago and earned a degree in voice, divides her time between directing the Shallotte Ladies Barbershop Chorus, which she founded, and getting ready for the performance of "Kismet" April 15-16 in the Odell Williamson Auditorium.

One day a week she also volunteers as a patient advocate at The Brunswick Hospital, a chance to use her master's degree in social work.

"I believe in community," she says simply—not just the geographic community but the "wonderful warm community" of her church, Seaside United Methodist Church, and that magical community which develops among people who sing with one another.

"They say you should stay busy. I may have overcompensated," she says with a smile.

In "Kismet," in addition to being vocal director, Houston has a lead role in the romantic comedy set in exotic Baghdad. Its score is adapted from the Borodin opera, "The Prince Igor Suite."

"It's great music, very challenging," she says, with familiar songs such as "Baubles, Bangles and Beads," and "Sands of Time." Houston has a leading role in the production as well as serving as its vocal director.

Her enthusiasm for the project is boundless, praising everything from the sparkling new Odell Williamson auditorium to the work of "Kismet's" director Stuart Callari, choreographer, Pat Pittenger and the Brunswick Concert band, under the director of Paul Pittenger.

With Her Ladies' Barbershop Chorus And Role In An Upcoming Production, Sue Houston Hits A High Note On The Local Musical Scene

Houston's face and voice won't be new to many Brunswick Countians who see "Kismet." They've enjoyed her Shallotte Ladies Barbershop Chorus at church, club and social gatherings for a couple of years now.

"They're a great group," she says with obvious pride. The chorus of 25 to 30 members doesn't just perform the songs traditionally associated with barbershop-style harmony. They do "religious, patriotic, country, tear-jerkers and toe-tappers."

Most had no previous experience with barbershop harmony, which arranges tunes into tenor, lead, baritone and bass.

When there's no published arrangement for a song they want to sing, Houston does her own, and gets help with the chorus from assistants Ginger Sughruue and Debbie Heustess.

The pinnacle of exposure for the chorus took place this past December with a 20-minute performance at the newly opened Alabama Theatre in North Myrtle Beach, S.C.

"They got to wear stage makeup and false eyelashes—I thought we'd created a real group of hams!" Houston joked.

"Seriously, we like to go out and entertain in the community," she added. "It's the bond you create singing together and reaching out to an audience. I try to help create that bond and bring happiness."

Houston, an accomplished pianist who has been studying since childhood, says she loves all kinds of music, from show tunes to classical to jazz to, of course, barbershop. She adds that she has developed a liking for country-western since she moved South.

She passed the love of music on to three children, all now grown, including a daughter who holds a degree in music from Oberlin and acts off-Broadway. After all, she says, that bond created by music holds families together, too.

Family pictures and travel mementos add warmth to Houston's cozy Bricklanding home, where vocal music plays softly in the background and 17-year-old feline Sylvester dozes in a shaft of sunlight.

Houston asks her visitor, "Don't you feel sorry for people who don't have music in their souls?"

'Hope Chest' To Raise Funds For Domestic Violence Shelter

BY SUSAN USHER

The Hope Chest, an upscale thrift shop established by Hope Harbor Home, will sell good-quality clothing and household goods while helping victims of violence.

Traditionally a woman uses a hope chest to gather clothing and household goods as she looks ahead to marriage and starting a home of her own.

Along with helping finance Home Harbor Home, The Hope Chest will offer that traditional edge in setting up housekeeping to a non-traditional clientele: battered and abused women who seek help from Hope Harbor Home and decide not to return to their former situations, but to start over.

"We're going to be able to meet the needs of our clients as they arise, at no charge to them," said Jeannette Deale.

Deale, who with her husband recently relocated from Vermont to Southport, joined Hope Harbor Home in January. She's program coordinator, volunteer coordinator, fundraising officer, shelter manager and for now, thrift shop manager.

Located in the former Pete's Sweet Shop next to Jane's Seafood on Holden Beach Road, The Hope Chest will hold its grand opening Friday, March 25. Sales hours will be Thursdays and Saturdays, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Fridays from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.

The shop will be closed on Mondays and will open Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. to accept donations of stock only.

Starting March 7 the shop will begin accepting donations of "good, clean, nearly-new" clothing, costume jewelry and accessories, toys, housewares and appliances, "how-to" books, and small items such as lamps and side tables.

"We're looking particularly for men's and boys' and infants' clothing," said Deale. "At this point we don't need women's clothing."

She prefers that clothing donated now be for spring or summer, since the shop has limited storage space. All donations are tax deductible.

While the shop will have 25- and 50-cent



STAFF PHOTO BY SUSAN USHER

PROGRAM COORDINATOR Jeannette Deale and a corps of 45 enthusiastic volunteers will soon welcome customers and donors to The Hope Chest, an upscale thrift shop on Holden Beach Road operated by Hope Harbor Home.

and \$1 baskets, they won't be its focus.

"We're going to be more upscale than some of the thrift-type stores in the area. Everything will be tagged, priced and displayed. We're even going to have a 'labels' corner," said Deale. "We are hoping to attract college students, working women, tourists and seasonal people."

In addition to used items, The Hope Chest

offers some new clothing. Deale contacts retailers for out of season or returned merchandise, slightly imperfects or manufacturer's overruns. Their prices will run a little higher than almost new clothing.

"If we have a brand new Champion sweatshirt we're not going to sell it for \$2," says Deale.

Deale already has her eye on expansion

needs: Space, at least 12 feet by 24 feet, in the Holden Beach area to keep larger pieces of furniture.

Also she has expectations about the success of The Hope Chest: net revenues of \$1,500 a month, about double its projected expenses of \$700 per month. "I certainly think that's doable," said Deale.

As program coordinator, she's betting on

it. Profits from The Hope Chest will help the United Way agency expand its children's program, provide 24-hour coverage at the shelter, and ease reliance on grants. This year's budget exceeds \$140,000, much of it in grants.

Services are aimed at women: a 24-hour hotline for victims of domestic violence, rape and sexual assault; temporary shelter for women victims and their dependents; court advocacy; information and referral; and counseling and training to help women learn to cope better with the situations they are in or to make a fresh start.

In 1993 Hope Harbor served 175 women, of which 78 were in shelter, plus 132 children in shelter.

A women's support group meets Thursday evenings. A Wednesday daytime program serves children ages 2 through 4, and after school groups serve youngsters ages 5 through 8 and 9 through 12. All are open to those in and out of shelter.

"The children's area is really critical," said Deale. "They are the ones who suffer most when there is violence in the home."

For information call Hope Harbor at 754-5726 weekdays. The 24-hour crisis line number is 754-5856.

Hope Harbor Has New 'Wish List'

Hope Harbor Home needs a variety of items to provide shelter and services to victims of domestic violence and sexual assault.

Anyone who can donate any of the following is asked to contact the shelter: four resin outdoor chairs; wagon with sides or garden cart; potty chair; midsize office desk; children's blocks; low six-drawer dresser; mid-size 2-2½-quart pots; playground toys; gas grill; videotapes.

For more information, contact Jeannette Deale, shelter manager, at 754-5726.

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