

Martha Strauch Bell

Marty Bell has spent her lifetime doing what she urges others to do: “Continue to love and share and appreciate the arts.” For that and for her efforts teaching students to love music, Mayor Matt Starr of Mt. Vernon, Ohio, has said, “anybody who creates art makes the community that much more special.”

Marty was born to Bolton and Martha Strauch in Canton, Ohio. She is the youngest of 6 children to graduate from North Canton City Schools. She attended Portage Elementary School where she was off to a great start with first grade teacher Mrs. Betty Bradshaw, 7th grade at the Portage Street building, 8th and 9th grades at the Junior High on Charlotte St., and grades 10-12 at Hoover High. Marty spent much of her junior high and high school years involved in choir under directors Dorothy DeFine, Harry Mason, and John Hayward and studied piano under Charlotte Mathias.

She performed in West Side Story, South Pacific, and Li'l Abner at Hoover. She carried several of the traditions of Hoover's choirs into her teaching career including May Fiesta, The Way You Look Tonight, the Old Routine, and Bye Neighbor. She graduated in 1985.

After graduation, Marty attended Bowling Green State University and graduated in 1989 with a degree in Music Education. She began her career as the Middle and High School choir director at Highland Local Schools in Morrow County where she remained for 10 years. In 1999, she took her talents to Mt. Vernon City Schools where she served as the Middle and High School choir director for 22 years until her retirement in 2021. While there, she developed the "Sounds of the Season" holiday music program for students in grades 7-12 and a "May Fiesta" for student soloists, ensembles and choirs.

Marty did not limit her efforts by focusing on only the community's youth. She has branched out to other

performing arts opportunities in Knox County. She has also been the director of Mt. Vernon's Heritage Singers, a 14 voice acapella group of adults, since 2005. She facilitated the Youth School for Mime Theater Summer Workshop at Kenyon College for 10 years. Additionally, she has performed with the Mount Vernon Players, Bruce Jacklin and Co., Right Brain Productions, and MTVarts. In addition, she developed a giving circle of 100+ Women Who Care who are dedicated to raising funds for local charities.

Marty has received recognition for her work. While working in her role on the Operations Board of the Mt. Vernon Music and Arts Festival in August 2021, she was surprised by Mayor Matt Starr who presented her with the key to the city to honor her service to the community as an educator and artist. It was the first time in a decade for the honor to be bestowed. Additionally, she was honored by the local chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution in March of 2022 for her service to the community.

Marty is married to husband Joe with whom she has 4 daughters, the Bell LadyBugs – Erin, Megan, Leslie, and Christine. They also have granddaughter Addison.

Marty is a member of the Gay Street United Methodist Church where she serves in the chancel choir and as the children's choir accompanist.

Marty enjoys travel, reading, and her community activities.

Martha Strauch Bell's service to Morrow and Knox Counties is an extension of her upbringing in North Canton. She is a daughter of whom the city of North Canton can be proud. It is with much esteem that the North Canton Alumni Association welcomes Martha Strauch Bell to the Hall of Distinction.