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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Door County Locals Sing at Birch Creek's Inaugural Vocal Jazz Session

Egg Harbor, Wis. – August 19, 2014 – Sevastopol School student Stephanie Benton and Gibraltar High School student Connor MacDonald – along with Southern Door teacher Bonnie Weydt, Gibraltar teacher Mary Bondeson and seasonal Door County resident Genevieve Heyward – studied voice under professional recording artists Janice Borla and Madeline Eastman at Birch Creek's inaugural Vocal Jazz session August 10 - 16.

Thirteen-year-old Stephanie applied to Birch Creek in early June. She studies music under Sevastopol teacher Cheryl Pfister and private instructor Kimberly Souther, and she is a member of the Door County String Academy. Lindsey Stirling, The Corrs, A. Vivaldi and John Legend are some of the musicians who are influential to her style. At the August 16 student concert, Stephanie sang Ray Henderson's Bye Bye Blackbird.

Connor is 16 years old enjoys music from Nat King Cole, Louis Armstrong, Frank Sinatra, Billy Holiday, and Peter, Paul and Mary, among others. Like Stephanie, he applied to Birch Creek in early June in response to news about the introduction of the vocal jazz session. He plays guitar, bass guitar and piano, and he studies music under Gibraltar teacher Charlie Eckhardt. During the student concert, Connor sang My Funny Valentine by Richard Rodgers.

Genevieve hails from Pell Lake, WI, but spends the summer with family in Door County and considers herself a part-time resident. Her school music teacher, Gregory Bunge, referred her to Birch Creek for the vocal jazz session. She plays piano, guitar and ukulele, but she especially likes to sing. "I've been singing ever since I can remember and love everything about singing." Genevieve recently won the lead jazz vocalist position for her school's jazz ensemble. I Got it Bad and That Ain't Good by Duke Ellington and Francis Webster was her piece for the student concert.

Bonnie and Mary are choral directors at their respective schools and accepted invitations from Birch Creek to participate in the vocal jazz session. Bonnie appreciates jazz artists Nat King Cole, Count Basie, Ella Fitzgerald, Bobby McFerrin and Oscar Peterson. In addition to singing, Mary plays violin, and she cites Itzhak Perlman, Joshua

Bell and Eric Whitacre as particularly influential to her. Mary started the student concert with her rendition of Bobby Troup's Route 66.

The application and auditioning process for students applying to Birch Creek is challenging. Applications must be submitted along with teacher recommendations. Vocal Jazz students are tested on music theory and audition for placement with a specific teacher. Although they perform only one public concert, they must keep up with a demanding class and rehearsal schedule.

Birch Creek Music Performance Center is a summer music school in Door County, WI, for advanced young musicians. With a performance emphasis, students are taught by nationally known performers and educators during the day, and perform alongside them in concerts at night. Five sessions focus on percussion and steel band, symphony, big band jazz, and vocal jazz. Applications are welcome.

A photo is attached to the email – credit to Heidi Hodges
Pictured left to right: Mary Bondeson, Stephanie Benton, Connor MacDonald,
Genevieve Heyward, Bonnie Weydt

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