ADVENTURES IN
Song

Niagara River Explorers members, from left, Matthew Mitchell, Dillon Anderson and Daniel Nation sing holiday songs during an open house at the Historic Holy Trinity on Falls Street in Niagara Falls.
The Niagara River Explorers boys choir performs today

BY ANGELICA A. MORRISON
Special to lifestyles

Amid the crowds admiring the holiday decorations at a recent open house at Historic Holy Trinity Church, 14-year-old Francisco Stender helped the youngest members of the Niagara River Explorers boys choir adjust their uniforms and straighten their neckerchiefs.

It was the Explorer's second performance of the year and among those who had stopped in to tour the church, the choir's proud family members were beaming with smiles.

"This is my first time seeing him sing," said Niagara Falls dad Jae Mitchell, who was there to see his son Matthew Mitchell perform. "I'm very excited."

The group's director, Pete de Rosa, said that the choir is a boys choir when he started the Niagara River Explorers last year. He had initially formed the group so inner city boys would have an option to the streets.

The Explorers are part of a larger organization called the Federation of North American Explorers, a boys outdoor adventure program created by the Catholic Church for young men.

"It's a robust outdoor program. We go hiking, camping and canoeing," de Rosa said of his boy's group. "We also try to improve their spiritual lives and teach them how to be good men."

The idea to form a choir came out of the blue, he explained, when professional musician and choir director, Anthony Kunz brought several young members to the Explorer's weekly meeting at Divine Mercy Parish at 24th and Niagara streets.

The choir was a bonus prize for the young teens, an activity added to the games and adventures the Explorers undertake.

For Francisco Stender, who recently moved to Niagara Falls from out of state with his family, the Explorers also provided a way make friends. "It's really great."

See SONG, Page 5C
The Niagara River Explorers Boys Choir performed recently at an open house at Historic Trinity Church in Niagara Falls.

**SONG...**

**CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1C**

because we get to do a lot of things. We play games and practice religion,” said Stender, who said he wants to be a Marine when he grows up.

As for the choir, it’s definitely a labor of love and all the Explorers sing.

“It’s a lot of fun,” Stender said to a visitor during the Trinity performance, adding, “It’s challenging at times, because a lot of the kids are younger and my voice is lower.”

Another Niagara Falls dad, Jim Faulkner, was in the audience as well, to support his son Shane, 11. This performance was extra special, the dad said, because at home performances are rare for Shane.

“He doesn’t sing in front of me, you may catch him every once in a while, but not often,” said Jim. “The Explorers has been good for him. He started in the beginning of September and he really enjoys it. They sing just about every meeting.”

The choir has been an unexpected success for De Rosa, so well-received by the community that he wants to grow it right along with the Explorers’ organization.

“Now, all of the sudden we have a boys choir smack dab in the middle of the city,” said de Rosa. “It’s my goal to have 30 boys singing with their beautiful voices. It’s out of the ordinary, but their doing a pretty good job and they’re enjoying it. So, we figured we’d go with it.”

The boys will be singing Christmas songs after the noon mass at 12:45 p.m. today at St. Mary’s of the Cataract RC Church, 259 Fourth St., in Niagara Falls. The free concert is open to the public. The Explorers weekly meetings are held from 7 to 8:30 p.m. on Fridays at Divine Mercy Parish at 24th and Niagara streets. For more information call de Rosa at 799-4362.