



### **Astoria Ukulele Orchestra: Connection Through Music**

Community members can feel isolated even if they are good musicians or have never picked up an instrument. The nonprofit [Astoria Ukulele Orchestra](#) was formed in 2020 to help accomplished or new players experience the joy of making music in a group. The 12 members improve their skills through practice and share their love of a wide range of songs with each other and the community at large through public performances outdoors and in local theaters.

The [social benefits](#) of playing and listening to music are well documented: music increases contact, coordination, and cooperation with others; gives us an oxytocin boost; and strengthens empathy and cultural cohesion. Individuals often experience increased hand and finger agility as well as reinforced cognitive health; the group feels a sense of purpose through community service by playing for local fundraisers and for Make Music Day; and the Arts Council of Clatsop County's mission is furthered by serving as the fiscal sponsor for the orchestra.

As of January 2025, the following players are orchestra members: Mike Brown, Angela Calvin, Dan Gerth, Pat Heck, Sherry Howser, Kasia Kavanaugh, Sheila Martin, Tom Martin, Claudia Russell, Dawn Stevick, Lorri Thompson, and Patrick Willis.

For further information, contact Sheila Martin at [missusmoose@lonetree.com](mailto:missusmoose@lonetree.com). Martin holds a degree in music and wrote her Ph.D. dissertation on music in the works of a Cuban novelist. She is classically trained and has teaching awards from two universities. After years of classroom and private instruction, she founded an ukulele orchestra in the Black Hills of South Dakota which she directed for four years before moving to Astoria. She has taught three levels of ukulele classes at Clatsop Community College since 2020.