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Music therapy made possible through Capital Region Community Foundation grant

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EAST LANSING, Mich. – Although Jeff has significant disabilities, they do not prevent him from making music. As a participant in Transitions North, a Community Mental Health program, Jeff attends weekly group music therapy sessions at the MSU Community Music School (CMS).

The program is made possible by a $3,000 grant from the Capital Region Community Foundation, which helps bring music to 21 people in the tri-county area, including two groups from Transitions North. In music therapy, people with special needs use music to build skills such as socialization, communication, and motor skills under the guidance of a board-certified music therapist.

A recent Wednesday morning session found Jeff singing, clapping, and playing the drums—his favorite instrument—alongside several other adults with special needs. The group’s music therapist, Jaime Merritt, led the participants through musical activities and songs including a song where they introduced themselves and the Addams Family theme song, seasonally appropriate with Halloween approaching.

“Music therapy is able to support each individual, adapting to their needs specifically. This allows them to be successful and expressive, evidenced by the smiles on their faces and the celebratory cheers of their peers,” said Merritt.

Without funding from the Capital Region Community Foundation, music therapy services would not be possible for the groups. The program was actually in danger of being canceled this fall, but CMS and Transitions North were able to work together and apply the grant funds in order to ensure the program’s continuation.

“When monies are invested in people, the return is most rewarding for them, their families, and the community. It makes their lives more fulfilling. Thanks to all who make music therapy a possibility for us,” said Nathan Wood, Senior Developmental Disabilities Clinician at Transitions North.

Wood has been accompanying members of the Transitions North adult activity program to CMS since September and said that he and other staff members even join in on the group activities, singing and clapping along with the music.
“We really enjoy music therapy sessions. Every time we go, we are delighted to attend and excited about what is going to happen. When those who are non-verbal participate and smile from ear to ear, we know they are pleased to be a part of music therapy,” said Wood.

The program will run through May, and CMS will continue to seek community support for the project.

“Music therapy is life giving for so many members in the community. We are so happy to provide positive experiences and a strong impact for the people of Transitions North. We greatly appreciate the financial assistance received from the Capital Region Community Foundation,” said Rhonda Buckley, executive director of the Community Music School.

For more information on music therapy or other CMS programming, contact CMS at (517) 355-7661 or visit www.cms.msu.edu

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Founded in 1993, the Community Music School (CMS) is the outreach division of the MSU College of Music. The mission of CMS is to provide comprehensive music education – quality instruction, related music services, and educational programs – for interested individuals of all ages and levels with financial assistance for those in need.