

The power of art to heal

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PALM CITY — Music is powerful. Music is enduring. Music and songs can conjure up a memory, an emotion or a moment that might otherwise be lost in time. Just as a lullaby is sung to soothe a child, music can lessen the anxiety of someone who is ill. Music can heal.

Artists for a Cause, a Palm City-based national nonprofit organization founded in 2009, provides several programs and services that support the community through the arts. One of its programs, Therapeutic Arts, offers the healing power of visual and performing arts to people who may not otherwise have access to it.

As part of the Therapeutic Arts program, Artists for a Cause sends performers, clinical musicians, and certified music therapists to assisted living facilities, hospital intensive care units, and to those at the end of life through hospice.

“The positive impact of music and art has been proven through

research. This program fits beautifully into the mission of A4AC where we are improving communities by using art as a catalyst,” said executive director Terry Barber.

The proven effectiveness of art and music therapy lies in their inherent ability to surpass language barriers and achieve therapeutic gains in a safe environment.

“Great art has the unique potential to elicit emotion, which is one reason it is so effective, but we also understand the difference between all art — which is therapeutic — and what a certified music therapist can treat, which is why we have a range of services within this program.”

The artists who are registered with the Artists for a Cause network are diverse in their talents and ages. An artist does not need to be a certified clinical musician to participate in the program and make a huge difference for the people they serve. A student with a violin can provide some relief

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and a positive distraction. Students with great access to arts education, such as those from the Pine School and South Fork High School Artists for a Cause clubs who share their talents at the R.E.A.C.H. facility and Boys & Girls Clubs of Martin County teaching visual art to less fortunate children, can produce not only beautiful art, but also provide a much needed creative outlet for at-risk youth who may not be as likely to express themselves with words.

Many artists are compelled to use their talents to help others, to heal along bring joy to the community. Artists for a Cause helps make this desire and passion a reality, seeking the best outcome for the artists and those they serve.

Jackie Robbins, a professional cellist (who has played in the Atlantic Classical Orchestra and The Palm Beach Opera orchestra locally, as well as playing for Tony Bennett, Bonnie Raitt, Dave Matthews, and more) has been very involved in the Artists for a Cause network. She recently went back to school and has received her Level 1 Clinical Musician certification. Through a restricted grant specifically to support her work, initially made possible by the Sheldon

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Photo courtesy of Artists For a Cause

Cellist Jackie Robbins is inspired to help the elderly through therapeutic music and is able to do so because of funds given to nonprofit organization Artists for a Cause who restricts them to Robbins' work through a fiscal sponsorship.

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and Betty Robbins fund for Therapeutic Arts with additional private support, she has been able to use her talents as healing properties to improve the lives of others.

So far, she has completed eight therapeutic care services at Treasure Coast Hospice for people at the end of their lives, and in the intensive care unit at Martin Health Systems. She additionally uses her talent in a therapeutic way at assisted living facilities both locally and nationally. Through this special restricted donation, Robbins will complete at least 40 Therapeutic Arts program services and plans to continue as long as donations that support the program are available.

“My goal is to help distract, sooth and comfort the patients. Whether I am playing for a group at an assisted living facility or for a hospice patient in the last stages of life, I put a lot of thought into the genre and time period of the songs I play so that those pieces will be relevant and meaningful to the patients,” said Robbins. “One time, while I was playing for a group, an elderly resident stood up and started singing along. She was just belting out the tune at the top of her lungs. The staff and other residents started crying, rose from their seats and started clapping. In all the years, through all the sing-a-longs no one had ever heard her utter a word. On that day I was particularly proud of my efforts to use my talent in a therapeutic way.”

There are many artists similar to Robbins who have the ability and desire to use art and music to help heal people but have never been compensated for those efforts. That’s where Artists for a Cause comes in to facilitate partnerships. Support from individuals, corporations and private foundations to Artists for a Cause can be restricted to a particular artist or program.

“We want artists to be aware of this opportunity and encourage those who might have access to this kind of support to reach out so that A4AC can become part of

their success in creatively building better communities,” said Barber. “We can offer the tax deductible donation to those who want to support artists’ talent, as long as it fits within the mission of our organization. That is what the industry refers to as ‘fiscal sponsorship’ and it’s a beautiful thing for the artists in our network, and those whose lives they affect. We applaud Jackie Robbins and welcome all donors who want to support her efforts, and those artists who wish to follow suit!”

Artists for a Cause is a Palm City-based, national, nonprofit organization that improves communities using art as a catalyst to achieve incredible results. Some programs help artists and charities get the most out of their collaboration, while others produce results directly, by feeding the poor, healing the sick, or solving other problems through unique artistic solutions. Current programs include Dance for Food, Therapeutic Music Day, A4AC Scholarships and Clubs, Artist Auction Packages and Benefit Concerts — all of which improve communities through artistic endeavors. Among the organizations receiving support from Artists for a Cause Inc. are the Boys and Girls Club of Martin County, Helping People Succeed, Treasure Coast Food Bank, Leukemia and Lymphoma Society, House of Hope, Sailfish Point Foundation, Arc Broward, Farmworker Coordinating Council of Palm Beach and more, as well as hundreds of artists in every genre. *To learn more, please visit www.a4ac.org, call (772) 419-8778 or email info@a4ac.org.* There is free registration for artists, charities, and volunteers on the website.

Fiscal sponsorship refers to the practice of nonprofit organizations offering their legal and tax-exempt status to groups engaged in activities related to the organization’s mission. It typically involves a fee-based contractual arrangement between a project and an established nonprofit. This alternative to starting a non-profit allows one to seek grants and solicit tax-deductible donations under the sponsor’s exempt status.