

Using music to heal the mind and soul in Qualicum Beach



From left, Julie Chambers, Stephanie Martyn, Melanie Young and Lyndsay Boers of The Gardens at Qualicum Beach display the \$10,000 grant they received from Music Heals for their music therapy program. The grant will allow for four more hours of music therapy a week for long-term care residents. — Image Credit: Jessica Skelton Photo

by [Jessica Skelton - Parksville Qualicum Beach News](#)

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The Gardens at Qualicum Beach recently received a \$10,000 grant for its music therapy program from the Vancouver-based charity Music Heals. The program is currently offered to the facility's complex care residents.

“We’re very excited,” said Lyndsay Boers, recreation co-ordinator at The Gardens. “Music really is a powerful thing.”

The grant will allow the Gardens’ music therapist Stephanie Martyn to provide an extra four hours of music therapy a week in 2015, bringing the weekly total hours to six. In addition, she said she will purchase some new equipment — a new bell chime set — to supplement the guitar and rhythm instruments she already uses with her patients.

At the moment, Martyn said she works with approximately 20 individuals at the Gardens, but Boers said the staff hopes all 96 of the Gardens’ complex care residents will get to work with Martyn at some point in the year thanks to this grant.

According to the Canadian Association for Music Therapy, music therapy is the use of music and musical elements to “promote, maintain and restore mental, physical, emotional

and spiritual health.” Martyn added that music therapy also acts as an outlet for creativity, emotional expression and interpersonal connection.

“For someone walking by, it would sound like I’m just singing a song,” she said. “But I’m hitting a different layer.”

“It’s used to rewire synaptic centres,” confirmed Chris Brant, CEO of Music Heals, who also said that music therapy must be provided by an accredited music therapist. As such, bringing a musician to play is “entertainment,” he said. “It may be therapeutic, but it’s not therapy.”

Director of Care at the Gardens, Melanie Young, said the Gardens is using music therapy to help reduce medication usage (particularly of anti-psychotics), reduce aggression and create a less isolating experience for their complex care residents, who often have cognitive difficulties brought on by dementia, Alzheimer’s, stroke and more. So far, she said they have reduced the use of anti-psychotic medication by 66 per cent since Martyn started providing music therapy in 2012. She also said that the program works as a way to promote connection with residents.

She’s seen people who often don’t like to interact with others ask when Martyn is coming back to the Gardens, as well as residents with severe memory issues remember song lyrics from their youth.

As mentioned above, the Gardens’ \$10,000 grant comes from Music Heals, a charitable organization that raises money and awareness for music therapy programs. Since its launch in 2012, Brandt said the charity has donated a quarter of a million dollars to programs in communities across Canada.

The Gardens at Qualicum Beach is the first of three facilities on the Island to receive a grant.

Brant also said that these funds are only given to pre-existing programs run by accredited music therapists recognized by the Music Therapy Association of BC. “Our goal is to increase access,” he explained. “You have to show you’re funding it and we’ll expand it.”

According to the Music Heals website, music therapy is also used in children’s hospitals, palliative care, AIDS & HIV programs, bereavement support groups and rehabilitation centres, as well as with at-risk youth.

Both Brandt and the team at the Gardens are keen to continue fundraising for music therapy in Qualicum Beach and the rest of Vancouver Island. In particular, Brandt says Music Heals is looking to help host fundraisers in which monies raised would remain on the Island.

For more information, please visit musicheals.ca