



## Resounding Joy: Healing Hearts With Music International Outreach

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Resounding Joy, Inc. is a non-profit organization based in San Diego that provides music therapy, recreational and supportive music services to under-served populations. Through networking opportunities, in August 2008, Alexandra Bashor, MT-BC, NICU-MT met Dr. Paul Grossfeld, a pediatric cardiologist from the University of California San Diego (UCSD). He and the cardiac surgical team through Variety Children's Lifeline were scheduled for a medical mission trip in October 2008 to Siem Reap, Cambodia. He was interested in the benefits music therapy can provide, so a budget proposal was created, illustrating the funding costs for travel, room and board, equipment, art supplies, and other necessities for the two-person music therapy team from Resounding Joy. Funding for the outreach project was provided by several private donations.

Each music therapist (Alexandra Bashor and Noelle Pederson) volunteered nearly sixty hours of their services to twenty patients receiving PDA (Patent Ductus Arteriosus) surgeries and their families at Angkor Hospital for Children. Outreach was also provided to approximately fifty other families who were at the hospital awaiting medical attention. The music therapy services included: direct contact with patients and families, documentation, audio/video recording, planning, and consultation with the UCSD cardiac team and Angkor Hospital for Children's staff. Intervention goals primarily focused on relaxation and pain-management, normalization of environment, and diversion from the hospital experience. The therapists compiled detailed numerical and anecdotal documentation; the following was written after the first session:

*We used music as a distraction and to build a sense of community among those in the hallway waiting area. There were several little ones (ages 4-8) who consistently followed us wherever we went—always with big smiles, little giggles, and hands open for the next instrument to play. Our first experience of the day showed how quickly music works its magic. No words were said and yet mothers were down on the floor with us helping their children create the community of sound through the common language of music.*

Dr. Grossfeld stressed the importance of "keeping the patients calm to prevent their bodies from entering a hypertensive state post-surgery." Sedation and medications can be administered to prevent hypertension; however, music therapy techniques offer a natural and holistic alternative to support medical interventions. The therapists used a variety of melodic mediums, such as classical guitar, ukulele, Native American flute, kalimbas, and vocal improvisation to create a comforting, supportive, and relaxing atmosphere for approximately forty people in a one-room surgical unit. Post-operative data was collected from each patient's heart monitor every five to fifteen minutes to gauge increases and decreases in the heart beats per minute (bpm).

The therapists matched the music to the patients' heart rates and gradually decreased the tempo to entrain the heartbeats to a more relaxed rate. The medical staff watched in amazement as a patient's pre-session heart rate was monitored at 146 bpm and was down to 107 bpm post-session after one hour of musical relaxation listening and interactive play. This occurred throughout the sessions, and the staff took several photographs and repeatedly acknowledged the power that the music therapy interventions had. The therapists encouraged individual creativity, family bonding, and play through music and creative art interventions by using various hand-percussion instruments, glockenspiel, bubbles, scarves, parachutes, and various small toys like a "Viewfinder." The concept of outdoor chalk art was introduced to build rapport and get them outside to experience their own creativity.

The instrument retailer REMO donated five uniquely designed, large shape drums with paintable heads and reinforced frames. Multiple families painted four drums during or after patients' surgeries. Each drum was painted in a different way – one sibling giggled with his mother as he held the paintbrush in his toes. Another toddler created her masterpiece by 'playing' the drum with her paintbrush like it was a mallet. A patient awaiting cataract surgery painted the last drum to take the focus off his pain. The therapists transported the

completed drum art back to the United States where they were displayed at the REMO exhibition in Los Angeles as part of the "Artbeat for Humanity Project." They were later sold at a silent auction sponsored by Resounding Joy, Inc. to fund volunteer program opportunities for children through the Junior Joy Giver program.

*These kids are so rhythmic; they just "get it" even though they probably have not heard music like this until now. We are continually surprised at how boldly and willingly the children try new things and how resilient their families have proven to be. – Alex Field, MT-BC, NICU-MT*

This experience was unique because it allowed complete freedom to try anything and everything in regard to therapeutic interventions. Music was the common language, the "rapport-builder," and of course, fun! Resounding Joy donated the instrument kit, the kazoo's and egg shakers to the hospital to share with patients and families. Maintaining detailed data, keeping anecdotal comments, audio/visual footage have all proven to be important factors in capturing the essence of our work. There is an enormous possibility for continued research and reaching past the borders into a new realm of music therapy techniques.



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