

“Music to Our Ears” at Karlins Center

Music therapist Jenifer Josephson, guitar in hand, approaches Lauren and sings to her, “I’ll ask you and you tell me, how do you feel today?” Lauren’s face lights up as she points to a picture of a smiling face and answers, “Happy.”

Then Lauren is asked which of her classmates should take a turn next. Lauren responds, “Corbin.”

“For her to focus and follow instructions with few cues is huge,” said Michelle Feigh, a service planner at Opportunity Partners’ Karlins Center who helped bring to Karlins a weekly music therapy program offered through MacPhail Center for Music.

Music therapy is beneficial to people with autism for a number of reasons. People with autism generally have difficulty with reciprocal conversation, verbalization of thoughts, wants and feelings, and limited social awareness. Music therapy enhances these deficiencies by giving opportunities for expression through music.

Michelle has seen progress in Lauren as well as the other participants since the start of the music therapy program. “Corbin is not just engaging in reciprocal conversation, she’s initiating conversation,” Michelle said. Another client, Kenny, has a difficult time taking part in many activities. But he likes music therapy. “Kenny comes willingly to every class and participates.”

The MacPhail music therapy program at Karlins is funded by a grant from the Autism Society of Minnesota. Because of the program’s success, Opportunity Partners will continue the program through May and is seeking grant money to cover the expense.

MacPhail’s music therapy program serves more than 300 individuals in classes and lessons and through partnerships with schools, hospitals and rehabilitation centers. The center has six board-certified music therapists and served approximately 200 clients last year. This is the first time Karlins Center has hosted the program at its site.

“The results have been amazing,” Michelle said. “Music therapy is giving our clients access to new experiences that are enabling them to enhance the skills they already have and to continue to build new ones. I feel blessed to be a part of this new partnership.”

“I am very excited to be able to bring our music therapists into the community,” said Todd Schwartzberg, music therapy partnership and recruitment coordinator for MacPhail Center for Music. “My colleagues and I are so privileged to be able to provide a safe, enjoyable avenue for people with disabilities to improve their social, cognitive, physical, communication and emotional expression skills.”

The partnership with Karlins Center is a positive step in providing adults with disabilities support toward achieving a higher quality of life, Schwartzberg said. “MacPhail is very thankful for the dedication of the Karlins Center staff, and we look forward to the future growth of the partnership.”

More information about MacPhail Center for Music is available at www.macphail.org.



Music therapist Jenifer Josephson uses music and colorful scarves to get the class involved.