Connecting, Restoring and Comforting Through Music

The mission of Allegro is not only to provide news about the LSO, but also to offer interesting and pertinent information related to different aspects of music. Throughout the year, Allegro will recognize individuals with special talents and abilities that make the Lynchburg area a great place to live.

Music is a constant in life - not just formal music through instruments and singing, but the daily rhythms and chords that surround us. The hum of motors, the click-clack of a train on the rails, and the simple tunes from early childhood all have meaning and cause us to reminisce decades after we first hear them. It is those elements that provide the foundation for the field of music therapy.

"Music therapy uses music interventions to accomplish individualized goals within a therapeutic relationship," said Jennifer Capone, a board certified music therapist, and founder and owner of Blue Ridge Music Therapy.

Growing up, Capone was interested in going into physical therapy. She first heard about music therapy after her mother gave her a Reader's Digest with an article about that field. "It was my aha moment," said Capone. An interest in physical therapy, plus playing in bands growing up made the field an excellent fit. Working in this field also means learning new approaches to music therapy. For sample, Capone recently finished certification through the Bonny Method of Guided Imagery and Music.

Therapy can include improvisation, playing instruments with the patient, songwriting, and lyric analysis. "It can be completely original or

a lyric rewrite to the song for the person," Capone said. "Music meaning changes over time. Those are the kinds of things I help people understand." However, she said music therapy is more than the music. "A very important element is the relationship developed between the patient and therapist."

Over nearly 20 years after completing her degree in music therapy, Capone has used music to help people with diverse challenges in their lives. "Much of my work through hospice involves patients and their families who face end-of-life situations and bereavement," she said. This includes helping people cope with symptom management, such as pain, and the emotional and spiritual aspects that happen at end of life. "Music therapy is not just for the patient," Capone said. "Including the family is an important part of what we do."

Capone and therapists at her company also work with at-risk youth through a Lynchburg residential facility. "These young people have a lot of emotions to deal with," said Capone. She said they use instruments such as drums to give the youth a positive, emotional release and expression. "Kids will participate and be in control, active and instructive," she said. "Teachers have told us how much the music has helped these children."

Even through it is difficult for families whose loved one is facing the end of life, there are rewards. Capone said she was working with a woman who had cancer and was bed-bound. On one visit to the home, Capone arrived to find members of family there and asked if they wanted her to come back later. "They are here because of you," she was told. "We had this great family sing-along. It was amazing," Capone said. "Every time I went back, all the family was there. They hadn't connected that way in a long time."

Capone said creating music with someone creates a connection. "I still feel connected with the families of patients," she said. Capone said she still plays music she made with patients and their families. "I clearly remember them and have those memories with me."

For Capone, live music does something that recorded music cannot accomplish. "It's the environment, watching the performers, and the energy of the room," she said. Capone said it reminds her being in a school band growing up and wind ensemble in college, and having music surround her while playing it.

What does Capone suggest when listening to music? "Be purposeful and put yourself in a space to receive all the music has to give."