

Music Partners in Healthcare provides beauty and healing through therapeutic music for hospice patients at Eskaton Care Center in Fair Oaks. Book of Dreams readers are asked to donate money to pay for therapeutic music for end-of-life care. BY [AUTUMN PAYNE](#)

The curative power of music was on full display at Eskaton Care Center Fair Oaks on a recent afternoon when Laura Caravello, a professional therapeutic musician, wheeled her harp into a patient's room and began to play.

"That's what I call a good visit," hospice resident Frances Rolfe, 102, said after Caravello played "Somewhere Over the Rainbow" and some improvisational music at her bedside.

In a nearby day room, 83-year-old Patricia Cavallini beamed as Caravello's colleague Elizabeth Proett pulled on her harp's strings in a slow, melodic, harmonic fashion.

"It just takes your troubles and throws them out through the window," Cavallini said as she took it all in. "I hope we are all in heaven with one of those things."

Then Juanita Moody, 95, took her turn with the music in her room. As the harp played, seven other residents gathered outside her door. Some leaned on their walkers. Others scooted their wheelchairs closer. They hoped to hear, too.

Activity Director Danijela Stroud stood nearby, singing the harpists' praises. "They call themselves therapeutic musicians," she said, but they are more than that. "I call them miracle providers."

Therapeutic musicians are experienced instrumentalists specially trained to play to the ebbs and flows of a patient's condition. Stroud marvels at how the music elevates patients' mood, calms them or energizes them. "I could use them every day of the week," she said, noting music can seem more beneficial than some medications.

Caravello and Proett would love nothing more than to avail hundreds more patients in the greater Sacramento area of the opportunity to connect with therapeutic music — whether they are in a facility or living their last days at home under hospice care.

Their nonprofit organization — Music Partners in Health Care of Fair Oaks — could do just that, with help from the Book of Dreams. They are seeking \$9,360 to provide 144 new sessions for people in end-of-life care next year.

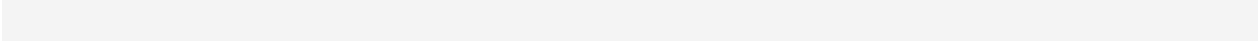
Music Partners in Health Care's 19 therapeutic musicians play a variety of instruments including harps, guitars, keyboards and Native American flutes. Their music is not entertainment; it is a healing art, Caravello said.

They learn how to do it with special training. They are required to complete 80 hours of health- and music-related course work, especially in the art of improvisation to match a patient's mood or situation. To become certified by a national organization of therapeutic music, each must also undergo an additional 45 hours of supervised internship experience in a health setting.

"As a trained therapeutic musician myself for the past 10 years, I have provided harp music to hospice patients and their caregivers during this difficult but beautiful time," Caravello said. "It brings a calming atmosphere."

She enjoys the challenge of changing the music to make it exactly what it needs to be in the moment — familiar or upbeat, or more somber or simple. "It brings healing, beauty and dignity to the patient as well as to the family and caregivers," she said.

Sometimes the musicians have to play on the fly: Viola Archer, 98, who spends her days at the center cruising the halls in her wheelchair to cope with restlessness, recently saw the harpists waiting for an elevator in the lobby. She motioned them to play for her. As the music unfolded about 4 feet away, she loosened her tight grip on the arms of her wheelchair. She dropped her hands to her lap, closed her eyes and appeared to meditate. When it was over, she opened her eyes slowly, smiled her thanks and then moved on.





1 of 2

Music Partners in Health musician, Elizabeth Proett, plays the harp for Patricia Cavallini at Eskaton Care Center in Fair Oaks on Dec. 4, 2018. Book of Dreams readers are asked to donate money to pay for therapeutic music for end-of-life care. AUTUMN PAYNE APAYNE@SACBEE.COM