



Our Lady  
of Peace

HOSPICE & HOME HEALTH CARE

## MUSIC THERAPY IS *magical*

*Our Lady of Peace Education Series*

*Music Therapist Lydia J. Holmes*, with Alliance Music Therapy, helps patients at Our Lady of Peace Hospice and Residential Hospice forget their pain and find comfort and peace through music.

She enters a room and breaks the ice with questions about favorite songs and moments of happiness in their lives where music was present. “I ask them what kind of music they like, and if they’ve sung in a choir or danced to a memorable song,” she says. “Then, together we decide on a song and I pick up my guitar to bring those memories to life, and for 30–60 minutes, they’re making their own choices and finding joy, instead of focusing on dying.”

According to the American Music Therapy Association, the idea of music as a healing influence dates back to the writings of Aristotle and Plato. However, music therapy formally began after World War I and World War II, when amateur and professional musicians went into veterans’ hospitals around the country to play for thousands of veterans suffering from the physical and emotional trauma of war. Although there are no formal reports, spirits were lifted and healing happened, leading to the realization that music therapy could become a profession.

Some might say Bob Hope was a kind of music therapist. For nearly 50 years, he brought his variety show

of song, dance, and comedy to service men and women in military camps and war zones across the world. Today, stars like Katy Perry, Ben Folds, and Operatic Soprano Renee Fleming are music therapy ambassadors, helping to raise money for music therapy programs.

Our Lady of Peace nurses and social workers make a referral when they feel a patient could benefit from music therapy, and there is no cost to the patient for the service. Lydia Holmes comes in at that point to bring comfort through music.

Elderly patients that are diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease or dementia are not exempt from music therapy. In fact, they are wonderful candidates to receive the care. Lydia says, “They may lose some of their cognitive ability, or even their ability to speak, but they still hold onto the music, as the memories surrounding certain songs and lyrics (especially those from childhood and young adult years) are neurologically strong and sound.”

Music therapy is being used to create a lasting memory for families of loved ones who have passed. Lydia once recorded the heartbeat of the woman’s husband through a stethoscope. She combined it with a meaningful song to the couple, and the patient’s heartbeat literally acted as the beat of the song. She gave the recording to his wife and she cherishes the recording to this day.

Lydia Holmes says, “It’s truly an honor to work in hospice and to be invited into these sacred spaces with clients and their families. I only hope to use the music to facilitate the space well and provide patients with peace and rest at end of life.”

Lydia’s best memory is of a man in his 50’s who was lying in bed at the Our Lady of Peace Hospice Residence, close to the time of his passing. He was surrounded by his young daughters who wanted to give their father a final gift of music. This family’s home had been filled with singing, making memories with beautiful voices and songs that became a treasured part of their life together.

Lydia entered the room, and suddenly the voices of the daughters came to life in perfect harmony, as she accompanied them on the guitar. Following the performance, one daughter said, “I think we should say goodbye to dad right now,” for in that moment, they all found peace in the music and the memories.

Music opens the door for Lydia to connect with Our Lady of Peace Hospice patients on a deeper level. As a trained music therapist, she listens and helps them find peace through telling their stories and escaping to a place that evokes happy memories. And, with compassion as deep as her repertoire of songs, she brings the magic of music into the hearts of our patients.



***We're here for you.***

We are passionate about community outreach.  
We would love to meet you and discuss how  
Our Lady of Peace can be a resource for you.

**651-789-5030**