

Teen brings Suite Melody to Oakville hospital

Leslie Ashworth looks to expand her music program across Ontario, Canada

by John Bkila
Oakville Beaver Staff

Leslie Ashworth doesn't have to be told music is good for the soul.

She sees it firsthand every month when she visits the Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital (OTMH), playing music for the patients in the rehabilitation ward.

It's part of a program the 17-year-old created a little more than two years ago called Suite Melody Care, which recently received formal approval at the local hospital, allowing Ashworth to eventually expand it to other hospitals and include more musically-talented youths.

"Music can reach deeply inside people. It brings people together from all ages and backgrounds, activates emotions, relieves symptoms and overall, gives patients something to focus on other than their

health challenges," she told the *Oakville Beaver*.

"Hearing and seeing how much the patients enjoyed the performances, I thought it would be wonderful to create a program so that other youths could do the same."

In 2012, Ashworth began volunteering at OTMH to play while patients in the rehab ward worked on crafts.

A testament to her musical talent, the patients began ignoring their crafts and focused on her playing. Ashworth was then invited by the hospital to come in just to play for the patients after they began asking for her.

The Oakville teen has been playing the violin since she was four years old, the piano since age six and the viola since 12 — but she admits the violin is her passion.

Homeschooled, Ashworth is in Grade 12 and takes online learning courses offered through the Halton District School Board.

She has completed her ARCT certification in piano, the highest level in the Royal Conservatory of Music exams — receiving first-class honours — and is currently working on her audition repertoire for the

bachelor of music program at the RCM's Glenn Gould School. Her audition is in February.

"I absolutely love music and I really enjoy bringing others happiness through it. It brings me great pleasure to take audiences on musical and emotional journeys because there are so many different emotions in music," said Ashworth.

"I remember one patient... she said the music brought tears to her eyes because she was thinking of her mom and how she used to sing those songs with her mom. It was really special."

And thus, Suite Melody Care was born.

After taking Grade 11 Leadership and Grade 12 Entrepreneurship courses, Ashworth further developed the idea for her program by creating a 40-page venture plan, logo and website (www.ashworth-productions.wix.com/suitemelodycare).

Every month, Ashworth chooses a theme, such as golden oldies, and selects a variety of musical pieces that reflect it.

She plays 45 minutes of music interspersed with musical trivia she provides the audience between the numbers.

see Ashworth on p.25



Leslie Ashworth established her Suite Melody Care program at the Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital's rehabilitation ward where she gives monthly performances for patients. | photo by Eric Riehl - Oakville Beaver

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