



Meet Beth Collier

About Beth

Classic rock is what's playing on Beth's iPod. But she loves all music. To Beth, music is the great connector: person-to-person, family-to-child, caregiver-to-patient. Through Beth, music makes the world a little smaller and a lot brighter.



A Day in the Life...

of a Music Therapist, Aflac Cancer Center and Blood Disorders Service of Children's

A music therapist helps patients meet physical and emotional recovery goals using music.

5:30 a.m. – Birdsong fills the air as Beth and her dog enjoy a pre-dawn walk. It's Tuesday, so she'll work at Children's at Egleston. Beth splits her time between two campuses, seeing patients with cancer and blood disorders.

8:15 a.m. – The rattle of Beth's instrument cart heralds her arrival on the third floor. The tools of her trade—bongos, maracas, an iPod, a keyboard—remain silent while she meets with caregivers to review patients' information. "Music has so many therapeutic elements—organizing movement, sharpening concentration, easing pain, improving motivation," she says. "And it's a lot of fun."

8:43 a.m. – Beth visits Will, who's having trouble coping with pain. He remembers Beth from an outpatient cancer clinic and lights up when she enters his room. Will's a fan of 80's music, so Beth sets up her keyboard and plays "Lady" by Styx. Will happily belts out the lyrics. As they sing together, nurses stop to listen. "He feels so much better when you're here," Will's mother says. "Singing puts the pain out of his head." Beth leaves behind a CD she's made for Will, so he can continue performing.

9:58 a.m. – In the Bone Marrow Transplant Unit, patient Mason spends hours writing songs. Today, Beth helps Mason set his words to melody. "Songwriting helps pull Mason through treatment. It keeps his mind engaged and gives him something to share, even though much of his treatment keeps him isolated."

11:03 a.m. – There's a joyful noise in the clinic's infusion room—where patients are receiving chemotherapy—as Beth hands out instruments

and directs an impromptu patient band. "Through music, we get to know each other, but patients and their families also get a chance to relax. Parents get a break, and chemotherapy isn't top-of-mind for a little while," Beth says.

12:07 p.m. – As Sarah anticipates a surgical procedure, her anxiety grows. Beth pays Sarah a visit, strumming a familiar tune on the guitar and changing the words to make Sarah giggle. Music and medication soothe Sarah as she drifts to sleep.

1:26 p.m. – During lunch, Beth and the brain tumor team discuss patients. Beth will visit with those with pain or coping problems this afternoon.

2:42 p.m. – In the ICU, Jared is recovering from a stroke caused by sickle cell disease. He can't speak, but he can sing. As Beth plays one of Jared's favorites, he chimes in with lyrics here and there, delighting his mother. "Music can complement speech therapy by establishing alternative language pathways in the brain," Beth explains. "This is what inspires me—sharing music with kids and families. It uplifts us both."

4:18 p.m. – Beth cleans instruments (as she does after each patient), updates patient notes, returns e-mails and tweaks her iTunes library. She also selects music for an upcoming hospital worship session.

7:12 p.m. – Beth ends the day on a high note, in rehearsal; she's a violinist with the Cobb Symphony Orchestra. "Music touches us all in different ways. Whether it's in a clinical setting or simply for relaxation, music soothes the mind, body and spirit."

What
job/function
would you like to
see spotlighted?
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