

Using music to bring the world together

February 6, 2021



In a time of a global pandemic where it feels like people are always fighting, Tricia Bartlett-Iverson has a suggestion – turn to music.

The founder and executive director of Harmony and Me Music, Bartlett-Iverson has seen firsthand the power of music to bring people and cultures together.

“Music is the most powerful tool,” she said. “It does so much for therapeutic purposes alone. There are very few people in the world who can’t engage with music.”

Bartlett-Iverson knows how music can impact people, and she hopes to bring that impact to more and more people. Her nonprofit Harmony and Me is based in Brookings, but she hopes to bring it and the power of music to Crescent City and many others places soon.

By any description, Bartlett-Iverson had a difficult childhood, spending most of her youth in foster homes. Music gave her a sense of direction then, and her vision of using music to bring people together first started as a 5-year-old.

“It was an experience I had in the community I was in, and I didn’t like it,” she said. “There were all these differences, and no one was coming together. So, I started dreaming of a way to bring us together. We’re all stuck here, we might as well get along.”

In 2009, while living in the San Francisco area, Bartlett-Iverson launched Harmony and Me as a way to teach young children music and provide comfort and entertainment to the elderly.

She taught music to pre-schoolers at Mission San Jose and would bring the youngsters to assisted living facilities where they would sing for the patients. The result was inspiring for both age groups.

When she moved to Brookings, Bartlett-Iverson brought her idea with her and relaunched Harmony and Me. While the pandemic has changed things, it has not stopped her dream.

“Right now, we do Zoom classes,” Bartlett-Iverson said. “It’s OK. We might do outside classes. I’m doing babies up to 10 years old.”

With assisted living facilities locked down due to COVID, the singers have not been able to perform in person, but Bartlett-Iverson has again turned to technology to reach out to the seniors.

At Thanksgiving and Christmas, Bartlett-Iverson had her students record music. She also reached out to the community, allowing anyone to play a song, sing or just leave a message. She made DVDs and handed them out at senior facilities, trying to bring a little joy to the elderly patients mostly locked up for close to a year.

A third CD, which will be delivered for Valentine’s Day is planned. Bartlett-Iverson will set up Feb. 4-6 at Fred Myer and other locations to allow people to leave a message for the seniors.

“Music is so powerful,” she said. “It touches our souls. A little bit of music goes a long way.”

And music alone can do so much for people, Bartlett-Iverson said.

“Some of my most concrete memories are people who are totally non-responsive,” she said. “A couple week later, they’re toes are tapping and a little later, they’re clapping their hands. It changes the dynamic of the environment. Our hope is to expand programs and to also use technology.”

With classes now on Zoom, Bartlett-Iverson said she can have grandparents in one location sign up for classes with their grandchildren in another. They can get together weekly and sing and make their own music.

“We have ways to connect families like never before,” she said.

While there are fees associated with the classes, Bartlett-Iverson said scholarships are available for families in need. She currently teaches music classes for newborns to 10 years old. She is also working to enlist teens to work with seniors on technology. She has plans to distribute iPads to assisted living facilities and hopes the teens can lead distance classes to teach the seniors how to use them.

The iPads can then be used to visit with family, send messages and even do important things like sign up for the COVID vaccine.

While her work today is in Brookings, Bartlett-Iverson is working on a model that can easily be transferred anywhere in the nation. With a trained teacher, Harmony and Me can be used to touch lives anywhere, she said.

While Bartlett-Iverson has been working with her nonprofit for more than a decade, it is a labor of love. She does not get paid and maintains a full-time job to cover her expenses. A few grants have helped provide things like the iPads and music materials she loans out, but it's mostly a labor of love.

"This just passion work, this is totally passion work," she said. "It's a calling. I can't not do it. I want it to explode."

For information about Harmony and Me and the classes offered, visit harmonyandmemusic.org or search Harmony and Me Music on Facebook.