

Rock that everyone can roll to

Sonder Music studio extends invitation to workshop for all skill levels

By Lindsay Whelchel
For Norman etc.

Hudson is 6 years old, with deep brown eyes and silky shaggy hair. Like many little boys, he loves Legos, Star Wars and art projects, but perhaps most of all, Hudson loves music. He has a keen ear and an ability to pick up on a song and its lyrics after only a couple of listens.

But Hudson doesn't just enjoy music — he relies on it. Being diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome, an autism-like disorder, as well as sensory and attention disorders, Hudson has benefited from music therapy, a scientifically promising treatment for a host of mental, physical and emotional issues.

For Hudson's mom, Julie Frost, seeing her son thrive with the melodic power of song became a catalyst for founding the Music Moves Mountains Foundation, a newly-formed nonprofit organization that seeks to benefit others through music. From workshops and mentorships, to performances, the organization reaches out to impact a community of people who range from the underserved economically to those dealing with developmental and physical disabilities or brain injuries.

"My son was diagnosed with a few disorders and music has always been something in his life that has really helped him get through a lot," she said, and added that Hudson now uses a developed soundtrack to accomplish daily tasks. This includes music to help with getting up in the morn-

If you go

What: All Abilities Rock
Where: Sonder Music, Dance & Art, 225 E. Gray St.
When: 2 p.m. March 30
Cost: The workshop is free and open to the public. Parents are encouraged to attend with children. Space is limited and registration is required. To sign up, contact Julie Frost at the Music Moves Mountains Foundation at 405-694-3700 or julie.frost@musicmovesmountains.org.

Note: For more information visit www.musicmovesmountains.org

ing, music to aid chaotic situations, and music that promotes focus for homework.

Frost first noticed a musical therapist office within the occupational therapist office Hudson was visiting in Texas. This prompted her to learn more.

"I've always worked in the music industry and been a big believer of its powers, but I didn't know a whole lot about the actual practice of music therapy," Frost said.

What she did learn, however, was bittersweet.

According to the American Music Therapy Association, music therapy can aid in stress relief, improve communication and even alleviate pain. But in Oklahoma, Frost said many insurances don't cover music therapy because it is not recognized with state board certification, only national board certification. As a result, music therapy is very expensive.

So the idea began to develop MMMF as a nonprofit that acts as a middleman and helps to raise funds

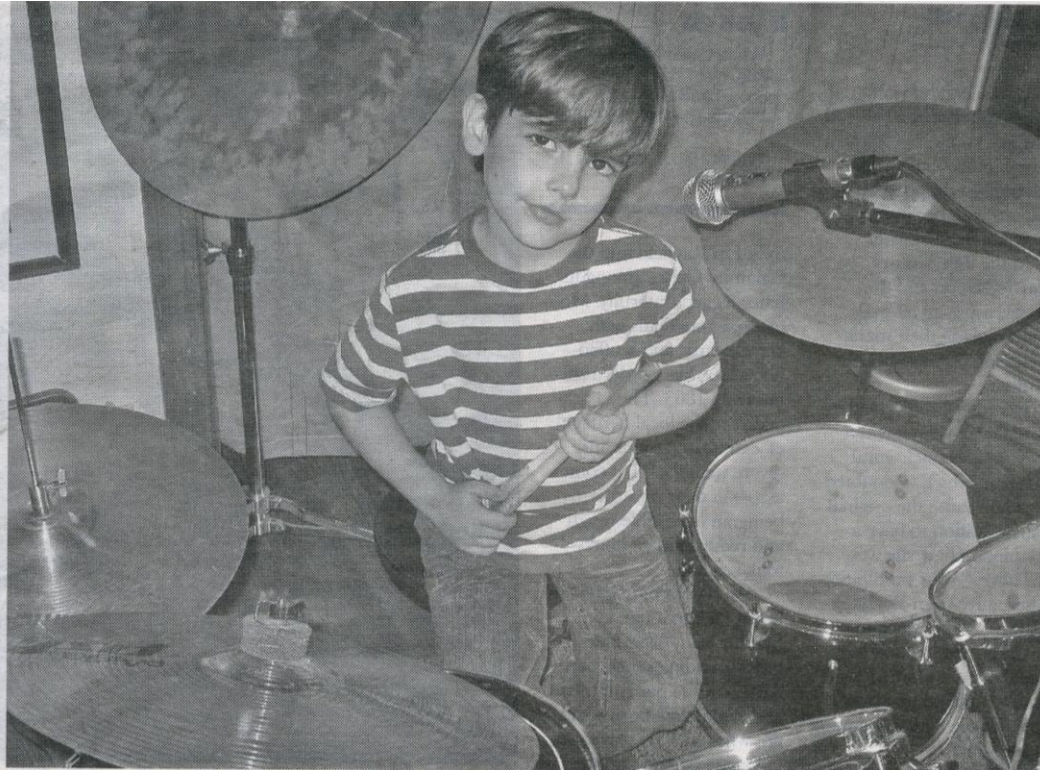


Photo Provided

Hudson Tartack, MMMF founder Julie Frost's son, benefits from involvement in musical therapy. Tartack, who has developmental disabilities, is the inspiration behind the nonprofit organization.

so those who can't afford the therapy can gain access to it.

Frost has seen the benefits firsthand with recent sensory friendly music workshops hosted by MMMF. Sensory friendly means that the sounds and colors are toned down and the environment is more conducive to putting children with autism at ease.

"One of the girls has autism and she was fairly non-verbal. Once the music started playing, she was able to express how it made her feel," Frost said. "Music can pull that out of people not able to communicate any

other way; it sort of acts as the middleman."

For children participating in the workshops, there is an added social benefit.

"It gives them an opportunity to completely be themselves and even make friends," Frost said. "It's hard for them to be in social situations and it's sort of a non-invasive, no pressure atmosphere."

Beyond the workshops, the organization has started outreach in the form of performances. The series is called "Feeding the Soul," which began over the holi-

days, and involves musical appearances at hospitals and nursing homes. Given that music memory is separate in the brain from other memory, Frost said music therapy is beneficial for Alzheimer's patients.

Another program called "Play it Forward," is gearing up through an instrument drive to provide those who can't afford music lessons or instruments an opportunity to learn how to play and then pass their instrument along to another child in need.

MMMF is in need of vol-

unteers, including those musically inclined, Frost said.

To help raise funds and awareness for these programs, a benefit concert is scheduled for April 6 at the Blue Door in Oklahoma City. The show will celebrate Oklahoma and feature local musicians playing songs from artists like Woody Guthrie and The Flaming Lips.

There will be an opportunity to donate an instrument for the "Play it Forward" program or a suggested \$20 dollar donation at the door.