

Theatre kids connect with seniors through song



By
Brock Weir

Selections from the Beatles and Dolly

Parton songbooks rang out through the halls of Aurora's Sunrise Senior Living on Wednesday as young kids connected with residents through the power of music.

About a dozen Sunrise residents gathered around as Katie McClure of Marquee Theatrical Productions' Broadway Babies program and her kids held an impromptu jamboree, the first of a series of programs at seniors' residents throughout Aurora and Newmarket intended to foster inter-generational connections.

The curtain lifted on Marquee's 'Rock of Age' program.

'Music is huge in the development of the children in our programs, but we have learned about intergenerational programs that connect young ones with the aged people as well and it really opens up their minds,' says Marquee's Sheryl Thomas. 'Music just brings people together and it reaches even those who can no longer speak. My mom had Alzheimer's and as soon as there was music on, she became alive again. It's amazing how music can really reach people' and seniors just love little children. They're hilarious to watch, so there is a nice interaction.'

Ms. McClure set up her song circle with ukuleles and guitars of her own, along with tambourines and pairs of maracas that were shared amongst the kids and the seniors. Songbooks filled with selections from the Beatles, including Hey Jude, Dolly Parton's Jolene, and Johnny Cash's Ring of Fire were particular favourites with the crowd.

Some seniors, however, wanted to go

off-book, pitching song suggestions of their own, and if a particular song they liked wasn't in the book, they took it upon themselves to lead a capella renditions of How Much is That Doggy in the Window? and Mairzy Dotes ? showing the youngsters how it's done.

?We're going to be adding some pages to our songbook!/? said Ms. Thomas following the song circle. ?I'm also going to ask my dad to come in because my mom was in a home like this and they used to bring in music programs. My dad knows all these songs and plays the guitar, so maybe he can join us. I think he would get a kick out of giving back to the community that way.?

Marquee's Rock of Age program is currently booked each Wednesday morning through to the beginning of July.