

Sisters Emily and Katy Sellers-Subocz share a special moment.

Providence Child Center

Tucked into a peaceful northeast Portland neighborhood is Providence Child Center. The facility's Center for Medically Fragile Children, the only one of its kind in the Pacific Northwest, is home to 58 children, from infancy to age 21, with multiple, profound disabilities and complex medical needs. While many things change in their young lives, music remains one constant – a unique and joyful connection to the world.



Katy Sellers-Subocz's life was altered nearly overnight. She had been a healthy baby, but once she turned a year old, a gradual change began taking place. Her coos quieted and her movements slowed until eventually, she lost most of her ability to move. Katy was diagnosed with the neurological disorder Rett syndrome and would no longer be able to speak and would have limited mobility. In time, she came to live at the Center for Medically Fragile Children at Providence Child Center.

Her Providence caregivers noticed there was one thing that made Katy smile – music. And music filled her life, from the gentle singing of a caregiver to the captivating sounds of CD melodies playing. Clearly, music brings joy to Katy and to so many of the medically fragile youngsters.

When Katy turned 21 in 2006 and could no longer live at the center, her family started the Katy Music Fund. This fund is part of a larger effort to fully endow the Center for Medically Fragile Children to meet children's basic needs and provide enrichment programs in perpetuity.

Emily Sellers-Subocz, Katy's older sister, spoke of the importance of music in Katy's life at a reception honoring the creation of the fund. "As most of you know, Katy has never been able to speak, and like many of the kids here at the center, her communication with the world around her is limited. The one thing that has consistently been able to get through to her and put a smile on her face, however, is the sound of music," Emily said. "Whether it's Raffi singing 'Baby Beluga,' James Taylor and his guitar or even country music, it all seems to animate my sister in a way that nothing else can.

"I'm sure that you've all experienced the power of music in your own lives in one form or another," Emily continued. "You know that music can be calming and therapeutic, or stimulating and invigorating. It can bring back memories and elicit emotions. These are all things we tend to take for granted. But for Katy and the kids here at Providence Child Center, music is a precious gift. It offers a connection to the world and an opportunity for stimulation that the severely disabled rarely get to experience."

The Katy Music Fund will ensure that the center's children continue to experience the wondrous power of music. If you hear music wafting from this northeast Portland facility, think of the joy it is bringing to some precious children.

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These children are the most vulnerable in our community. How can we not help? Especially since Providence Child Center is really the only place for these special families to turn to. If we can help make sure that the Child Center will always be there for years and years to come – what a wonderful gift that would be.

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