



Music Therapy in Motion Staff  
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Words & Photography  
by DEVIN JOUBERT

## HELPING INDIVIDUALS **ONE BEAT** at a **TIME**

Music therapy is crucial because music is integral in our life,” says Kyle Johnson, who is just an ordinary guy whose life suddenly changed when his all-terrain vehicle was hit by a train. Johnson subsequently suffered a traumatic brain injury. About two years ago, he came to Music Therapy in Motion using a walker and had limited speech. After the accident, he set a goal that he’d like to drive his car to work and be independent. Through the help of music therapy, Johnson improved his walking from 35 beats per minute to over 80, and was able to reach his goal, driving himself to therapy and work, just as he’d originally planned.



“Music therapy changed his life,” said Emily Wangen, owner of Music Therapy In Motion.

With a heart full of compassion and a mission to help more individuals one beat at a time, Wangen is happy to announce their new Fargo clinic, which opened April 2016.

After graduating with a bachelor’s degree in Music Therapy at UND, Wangen began her music therapy career. She started out by driving about 900 miles a week to help people across North Dakota and Minnesota. Now, with the two clinics in Fargo and Grand Forks, she is hoping to help many more. At Music Therapy In Motion, they use music to achieve non-musical goals, which are unique to each individual they help.

Music Therapy In Motion employs six music therapists and two interns. They do a variety of

music therapy sessions including one-on-one sessions, group jam sessions and adaptive lessons. “Music therapy encompasses the entire brain,” says Wangen. “We use specific music therapy techniques to stimulate the affected side of the brain. As a result, the engagement activates the hemisphere’s healthy tissue, building neuropathways to recognize a desired response.”

In the last 10 years, Music Therapy In Motion started over 50 music therapy programs in North Dakota and Minnesota. “On average our team travels a thousand miles and sees 1,500 people a week,” says Wangen. “It’s incredible to see how music therapy impacts people.”

Music Therapy In Motion works with many individuals, from birth to end of life. “My favorite part of doing music therapy is when a child speaks for the first time through music therapy,

or when an individual is able to overcome an anxiety or fear through music,” says Wangen. The best way to understand how music therapists work is to see what they do. Anna Mitchell, assistant director of Music Therapy In Motion, says, “Seeing is understanding. It paints a picture.” Since seeing is understanding, let’s take a peak into what individuals do in music therapy sessions at Music Therapy In Motion.

In music therapy sessions, Kyle Johnson used his right foot (the side affected in the ATV accident) to tap a bass drum pedal, similar to stepping on the gas pedal in the car. A musical task like this was used for the non-musical goal of helping him drive his car.

Paul Leier Jr. comes in for an adaptive guitar lesson where music therapist Ashley Holten helps him learn to play an instrument at a level

he can understand. The lessons build his sequencing and motor memory skills, as well as just being a fun activity for him. His dad, Paul Leier Sr., adds with a chuckle, "He practices every night. The concert starts between 9 and 10 P.M."

"He is hard on himself. Aren't you, Paul?" Holten asks. Paul Leier Jr. responds with, "Well I have to be, because I want to be the best."

Roma Landis comes to Music Therapy In Motion for a jam session with Anna Mitchell, her music therapist. Landis, 18, has a disorder known as Prader-Willi syndrome and started music therapy when she was five. "She has come a long way with it," her mother, Jennifer Bredahl says. "It helps her socialize with people and lowers her anxiety. She can't learn the ABCs but she can sing them. It's been amazing."

At the end of Landis' session, Mitchell asks, "Roma why do you like music?" Landis answers, "Because it makes me happy."

"Roma always says, 'Best day ever!'" Landis' mother says. "I just want to have the same attitude. She really teaches us a lot and to enjoy the simple things."

That's what Music Therapy In Motion wants to do. They want to enrich and impact people's lives one beat at a time so individuals can live up to their fullest potential.

## FACTS:

- > Music Therapy In Motion may be covered by insurance, depending on your plan.
- > Music Therapy is provided for: individuals and groups, including schools, children's hospitals and oncology.
- > Music Therapy may help individuals with autism, Down syndrome, neurological disorders, grief, memory issues and those on hospice.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:  
Music Therapy In Motion  
musictherapyinmotion.com  
emily@musictherapyinmotion.com  
218-791-0908  
6046 14th St S, Fargo

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