

Featured Center Director: Jeanne Calderon

Jeanne Calderon is the director of Music Together Chesapeake (Maryland), where she teaches family music classes, coordinates Music Together outreach programs for preschools and assisted living centers, and organizes service projects for her Music Together families. With the help of a supportive network of co-workers, families, and business owners, Jeanne is building communities of music-makers, one step at a time.



Back in the fall of 2010, Jeanne was approached by one of her teachers about organizing an intergenerational class at Atria Manresa, an assisted-living facility in Annapolis, Maryland. Since Jeanne was now an "empty-nester," it seemed the perfect time to begin this venture. "When I was raising my boys, I only had so much energy to devote to Music Together," explains Jeanne. "When my youngest went away to college, then I could focus on other things. I already knew that there was this wonderful sense of community in our Music Together classes, so I took time to figure out: How do we reach out to the world at large?"

The program at Atria Manresa, in which the assisted-living residents participate in class alongside enrolled families, has been a great success. "It's so rewarding," she comments. "The residents really appreciate us coming and they respond to the music and to the children. The families are there because they want their children to have an experience around older people. Even though many of the residents are in wheelchairs, they still sing along and are engaged in their own way, internalizing the music."



With one successful outreach project underway, Jeanne began to think about others she could organize. Realizing that her Music Together families were more than willing to help those in need, she began the "Reaching Out" program. Twice a year, Jeanne invites her families to participate in outreach initiatives. For the program's first service project, families sent care packages to troops in Iraq. Then, in January 2011, they donated supplies and equipment to the Cisco Center, a school for children with special needs. The school, which serves families with children ages two through ten, had lost everything in a fire and was in desperate need of assistance.

With the help of these Music Together families and many others in the community, the Cisco Center was able to rebuild and reopen its doors. Through this project, Jeanne met Cisco Nochera, director of the Cisco Center, who agreed to bring the Music Together Preschool curriculum to the school. Jeanne now teaches two classes there and is delighted with the opportunity to make music a part of the children's lives. "The center is a wonderful, nurturing place, and all the teachers sing!" says Jeanne. Although she has never worked with children with special needs before, Jeanne feels that she is really making a difference in their lives. "When we first started the classes, there was one little boy who wouldn't look at me," she recalls. "By then end of the semester, he would jump up and down and was excited to see me. What a joy this teaching has been."

—Kate Battenfeld, *Music Together* contributing writer

If you would like information on how to start a Music Together outreach project in your community, please contact outreach@musictogether.com.

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