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"I can't quite explain how the music makes me feel," said chemotherapy patient Jesse Bishop. The Wake Forest resident and Brooklyn native had just been entertained in a one-on-one performance by Chapel Hill singer/guitarist Callie Warner, who sang such songs as "Wagon Wheel" and "I Dug Up A Diamond. After the two had finished walking up and down the corridor near the nurses' station, Mr. Bishop told me, "I really, really enjoyed it. It lifted up my day."

Callie and I are volunteers in UNC- Hospital's Door To Door Program, which was started by Chapel Hill resident Joy Javits in 1993. Each week, photographers, poets, musicians, magicians, dancers, storytellers, painters, photographers, poets, mask- makers, and more visit the adult and pediatric patients at the hospital.

Steve Villano, a nurse, said that the music "helps patients minds drift elsewhere to focus on something pleasurable, a distraction after the depression that often accompanies chemotherapy. For the staff, it brings a lightness, a different spirit to the floor."

Guillermo Serrano, a Honduras native from Wilmington, pronounced the voice of Ms. Warner, whose regular music gig is with the group Southern Routes, to be "muy bonita." I agreed with him that her voice is indeed "very beautiful", as she is as comfortable with blues, country, rock, jazz, and pop standards. I, on the other hand, drew a hearty laugh from Mr. Serrano when I fumbled through "La Bamba" in broken Spanish.

Joe Parciak was being treated for Leukemia when Callie and I visited his room. His wife of forty-seven years, Veta, and daughter Margaret Lyle, a Raeford resident, were also in the room. The affable Joe asked me if I knew the Dean Martin song "That's Amore!" While I can usually call up songs from many eras, especially the sixties, I could only summon the familiar first line, which Joe sang with me: "When the moon hits your eye like a big pizza pie, that's amore!"

Hearing and singing music seemed to well up childhood memories for Joe. "When I was six or seven, my mother took me to a tavern where people would play the jukebox and I would dance on a table," he said. He spoke highly of the care he was receiving. "The doctors and nurses are polite and caring. They like you to tell them how you're feeling. I'm happy to be here and I feel safe."

Although the Door To Door artists are generally veteran performers or exhibitors with the public, Joy Javits takes care to give us written and verbal instructions on how to conduct ourselves. These mini-lessons range from reminders to wash our hands well before entering the patient areas, to guidance that we will see "hard things to experience", e.g., sores and blood and disfiguration. She asks us to respect a patient's wish *not* to be entertained, as he or she may be too tired, eating dinner, or having visitors. She suggests that we not ask patients "how are you feeling," as that simple inquiry reminds them of how bad they feel.

Door To Door artists frequently remark how uplifted they feel when in the room with patients. Callie Warner, who was inspired in part to join the program because her own sister has cancer, told me that visiting the burn unit is especially rewarding to her. "I know that burn patients usually stay in the hospital for a long time. Music is a vehicle that takes them to a different place. When a patient joins me in song, it's as if we're in the same river together."

Singer/songwriter Jonathan Byrd, in an essay he wrote about "Door To Door" called "The Toughest Gig", noted that "No higher honor could be bestowed on any musician; no tougher gig ever existed." When he played for a dying cancer patient, he felt "like a messenger from God, summoning all the joy, beauty and humanity that I could manage. I was smiling and crying at the same time."

Door To Door (www.doortodoornc.com) participants try to emulate the infectious enthusiasm and generous spirit of Joy Javits, the program's founder and coordinator. An actress, choreographer, dancer, radio show host, public speaking coach, and former Chair of the Orange County Arts Commission, she brings out the best in visiting artists so that we can be at our best for the patients. Joy is the daughter of the late U.S. Senator Jacob Javits, a co-founder of the National Endowment for the Arts and Marian Javits who, says Joy, is still "an arts impresario" in New York City.

I have watched my friend Janet Stolp sing the Lucinda Willams song "Passionate Kisses" and bring smiles to a room of twenty people, patients and families, in the Eating Disorder clinic. I have listened to Stacey Curelop of Hillsborough, the lead singer of our band Red Rhythm, perform a stunning version of "Amazing Grace" for an elderly woman who mouthed the words with Stacey. We complete each visit with a request to Joy: "When can we come back?"

(Hillsborough resident Peter Kramer is a musician with the Door To Door program. He can be contacted at greenriverband@aol.com)