

## Sacred Stories

# The Singing Therapist



spirituality

### **Suggested Sacred Text**

*Shout with joy to the Lord, all the earth;  
break into song; sing praise.*

Psalm 98:4

Laverne is a 91-year-old patient who receives physical therapy services from VNA Health at Home. She lives with her daughter, who cares for her. Laverne had become increasingly withdrawn and sad, just sitting in front of the television. Her inactivity led to weakness, making it increasingly difficult for her daughter to take care of her safely at home.

That's when our "singing therapist" entered the picture. Connor studied music in college and pursued a career in opera. When he settled in Louisville with his wife, he felt drawn to health care, where he thought he could make a difference in people's lives.

Connor often uses music with patients who have conditions that make it difficult for them to communicate. He says that when patients associate physical therapy with music, they look forward to it. It's much more effective than just handing them a sheet of exercises to do.

Laverne knows that when she does her exercises, Connor will sing for her. He engages Laverne with music that is familiar to her. She sings along to some of her favorites, songs made famous by Nat King Cole or Bing Crosby.

Connor joined our organization after working for another home health agency. He said it was obvious to him that our culture cares more about our patients than about our bottom line, and invites the gifts and talents of those we serve and serve with. He likes the opportunity to be creative and use his gift of song in a way that allows him to make a difference for patients like Laverne.

Music has a way of deeply connecting aging patients to their histories and to the present, neither of which can be separated from each other, only enriched. We can't make Laverne young again, but we can keep her engaged in the life she has now. The encouragement and invitation to bring all of our talents to our work,

including the gift of song – which opens the heart – is evidence of the Spirit at work in health care.

**Wendy Sharp, RN**  
*VNA Health at Home*  
*Louisville, Kentucky*

### **Questions for Reflection**

*What songs connect you to your past, whether to happy times or to challenging situations?*

*What talents do you bring to work (in addition to your basic job skills) that connect you to others?*

*How have your gifts and talents been called upon to support CHI's healing ministry?*