

PRESS RELEASE

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Strengthening body, mind and soul: Albert Berner Foundation supports new music programme for people in need of care

With a new musical programme, the Keppler Foundation in Künzelsau can now reach even more very old residents and residents with dementia in its homes - for the first time, especially those who are not mobile. The pilot project, which will initially run for one year, is being made possible thanks to generous start-up funding from the Albert Berner Foundation. The charitable organisation is providing funding totalling 10,500 euros to purchase instruments (including a guitar, table harp, monochord and percussion) and the necessary sheet music. The donation also covers the personnel costs for organising and supervising the sessions.

The new programme follows the didactic approach of music geragogy. "In contrast to music education, geragogy is not about senior citizens being able to play an instrument flawlessly or sing a song perfectly," explains Deacon Wolfgang Bork (Oberbinsbach), a trained music geragogue who specialises in musical education for the elderly and runs the programme. "The aim is to utilise the positive influence of music on the body, mind and soul and to make it available to as many residents as possible." Those responsible hope that the programme will have the following effects, among others:

- Increase concentration, coordination and memory performance
- Strengthening breathing, motor skills and physical strength
- Activation, communication, social integration

"My husband and I are very grateful that with St. Bernhard and the dementia centre here in Künzelsau, we have a place where people can age with dignity and those in need of care are looked after both professionally and lovingly," says Ursula Berner, Chairwoman of the Albert Berner Foundation's Board of Trustees. "Bringing even very elderly, disabled or seriously ill people into contact with music is very much in line with our foundation's philosophy. We are therefore very happy to support the project. I am sure that the offer will provide a ray of hope in the grey of everyday life and can make an important contribution to maintaining joie de vivre and self-esteem."

Individual support, group appointments and musical hikes

Until now, there has been a weekly singing group at the St. Bernhard senior citizens' centre, which is organised by volunteers. In future, this programme will be supplemented by several other elements at the Keppler Foundation in Künzelsau. In the Max-Richard and Renate-Hofmann-House with the house communities, for example, a weekly music devotion takes place - thematically appropriate to the season and the

church calendar. Wolfgang Bork works hand in hand with the facility's carers, who can add their own methodological content to the teaching concept if they wish. At St. Bernhard, the geragogue "wanders" through the corridors and open living areas once a week for an hour, singing and making music. Anyone who would like to accompany him or actively try out one of the instruments can join in spontaneously. Wolfgang Bork also visits residents in their rooms, most of whom are bedridden and known to have an affinity for music. "The one-to-one musical care is completely orientated towards individual needs and abilities," reports Karin Kozel (Head of Social Services). We particularly want to bring people into contact with music who are unable to attend group appointments due to their need for care."

Permanent inclusion in the programme planned

The programme, which was launched in October, has been extremely well received and is already showing initial success. "It's great to see how making music together brings back memories from the distant past," reports Wolfgang Bork. "Particularly for people suffering from dementia, familiar pieces of music from earlier years are firmly anchored but often no longer present. Making music helps them to remember and sing along enthusiastically."

Community building is also promoted in the long term, as Gisela Tränkner (Head of Social Services) explains: "This enables us to build bridges with each other. All participants can create something together. Music is therefore an important door opener for togetherness. It's always nice to look into the shining eyes and realise that the music has a positive effect."

After the pilot year, the new musical programme - modified if necessary - is to be permanently integrated into the care programme of the Keppler Foundation in Künzelsau. This consists of the St. Bernhard senior centre for 70 mainly somatically dependent senior citizens and the Max-Richard and Renate-Hofmann-Haus. There is a sheltered area for two house communities, each with 13 people suffering from dementia.