



Photographs by Joey McLeister/Star Tribune

Max Plisner plants a kiss on Barbara Lee Friedman's cheek as she sings to participants in the Sholom Home East Adult Day Program. Friedman and fellow musician Sherry Carpenter perform for seniors as many as 30 times a month through their nonprofit outreach program, Music Memories.

Music to their ears

By Tim Harlow
Star Tribune Staff Writer

For Paul Balian, it hurts to sit up and eat. It hurts to walk. It hurts to lie on his bed hour after hour, watching TV, reading or staring at the ceiling of his third floor room at Sholom Home East, a nursing home across the street from the State Fairgrounds in St. Paul.

Nothing seems to alleviate his constant back pain, except when Barbara Lee Friedman stops in to chat and strum a few tunes on her six-string guitar.

On a recent visit, at Balian's request, she sang "Isle of Capri." The folk song brought a wide smile to his face as he recounted the time in 1945 when he bought a lapel bell pin on the island near Naples while serving in World War II. He later gave it to a woman he met on a bus. When Friedman finished singing, Balian gave her a kiss.

"She's very precious," said Balian, 80. "When she's here, it's the only time I have without pain. To have her visit is tremendous."

MUSIC continues on E9:

— Friedman's musical career began when she was 12.



Friedman shares a song and some time with Pearl Klatzko at Sholom Home East.

MUSIC from E1

Yiddish music and classic American tunes featured

The two struck up a friendship about a year ago during one of Friedman's frequent visits to the St. Paul care facility that she makes through Music Memories, a nonprofit outreach program to seniors that she started in 1991 with fellow musician Sherry Carpenter.

As many as 30 times a month — 300 times a year — the duo drops into Twin Cities area nursing homes, hospitals and activity centers to affirm older adults through light-hearted banter and short musical performances. At Sholom Home, where many of the residents are Jews from Russia and other Eastern European countries, the program consists largely of Yiddish music, as well as classic American tunes.

"My brother calls me the Raffi of the nursing home scene," said Friedman, 52, of Minneapolis. "They are the bored, lonely and forgotten. Few people visit them; that's why we started Music Memories."

Friedman made her rounds recently, greeting most residents by name. She told jokes, asked questions, sang songs from the first half of the 20th century and doled out compliments.

"Hey Stanley Reuben, you dress so nicely," Friedman said stopping mid-song to hold his hand. "I'm going to take you shopping with me."

She chatted with Mabel about her upcoming 95th birthday. She cajoled Max Plisner, 96, into doing a two-step as she played a spirited rendition of "Roll Out the Barrel." And she got Myra Sue Finn to tell stories about her mother, who was a flapper in 1920s St. Paul.

"She's a master at what she does," said Jim McDonald, manager of Sholom Home's adult day program. "She makes people feel as if they are the only one in the world. They just eat it up."

Friedman began her music career at Sholom Home East at age 12, singing with her dad.

After college, she spent 30 years performing and teaching. She founded Music Memories 12 years ago.

"This is my passion," said Friedman, who shares her \$100 per performance with Carpenter. "It's so rewarding to see people come alive. Some of these people can't remember their name, but there's some-

thing about music that can get to people in ways other things can't."

Sholom Home nurse Sandy Sager said the way Friedman gets residents to clap, tap their feet and sing such songs as "God Bless America" and "Amazing Grace" definitely improves residents' quality of life.

"It's marvelous," Sager said.

"She provides tactile touch and they need that. They just love her."

— Tim Harlow is at harlow@startribune.com.

To contact Music Memories, call 763-588-4474 or go to <http://www.musicmemories.org>.



Myra Sue Finn sang "How're You Gonna Keep 'em Down on the Farm" with Friedman during a recent Musical Memories program at Sholom Home East. Finn attends the Adult Day Program.

Photographs by
Joey McLeis-
ter/Star Tribune
**Barbara Lee
Friedman likes
to include
everyone. She
sang and
played a polka
to the delight
of staff and
participants
at the Adult
Day Program
at Sholom
Home East. At
left, program
director Jim
McDonald
dances with
Fanya Onegi-
na as Pearl
Klatzko
dances with
nursing as-
sistant Vickie
Ferraro.**

