



Impact Stories

Experiencing the
Transformative Power of Music

*"Music is life to me. It can take me
somewhere that nothing else can."*



Changing lives... one note at a time!

“Music ensures that we are positive and respectful of other people. It creates love. That’s what it’s all about.”

Jared

Music Clubhouse Member





Introduction

“Music gives a soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination, and life to everything.” ~Plato

Dear Friends,

Since 2004, Music & Youth has proudly partnered with leading youth development organizations, universities, corporations, foundations, and supporters to bring the power of music to thousands of underserved youth.

The opportunity for these young people to have music in their lives is incredibly meaningful. The best way to appreciate this impact is to read their individual stories.

They are stories of determination, courage, hope, and joy. They are stories of personal growth and of self-confidence and self-esteem. Compiled together, the stories offer a compelling coda to the work we collectively do every day.

Thank you for your continued support and commitment to the youth we serve, and for giving us the privilege of being a small part of these and many other amazing stories. We hope you get both enjoyment and satisfaction from reading them.

Warm regards,

The Music & Youth Team



Impact Stories

We create accessible, sustainable, high quality music programs so every young person can experience the magic of music.

Vision Statement

We believe that every young person should have the opportunity to experience the magic of music. Music has the power to build academic and social skills; unleash creativity; and develop self-confidence and self-esteem.

Strategy for Impact

Music is the magnet which attracts youth to a safe place to learn and grow, away from the culture of drugs, gangs and violence which is prevalent on the streets of the low income urban areas we target. Our partnership with Youth Development Organizations provides these young people, ages 10-18, with free after school music education as well as access to programs aimed at successful high school graduation, opportunities for developing job skills, and college preparation support. All of these programs build self-confidence and self-esteem that will last a lifetime.

Why Music?

Music touches the mind, the heart, and the senses. Throughout history music has uplifted, engaged, engendered joy and united people of diverse backgrounds. It changes lives. Our students challenge themselves to pick up an instrument, to write a song, to sing. Perhaps most importantly they become part of a creative team. They motivate one another. We have seen young people elevate their academic standing. We have seen a shy boy, an alienated girl, change their hearts and grow with the music. Music sparks the imagination and lifts the soul.



Impact Stories

Table of Contents

Overcoming Adversity.....	6
Excellence in Music.....	17
Developing Leadership.....	24
Academic Achievement.....	32
Personal Growth.....	36
Mentor Stories.....	45



Overcoming Adversity

“Through songwriting, and with an important message to share, our participants have emerged from a difficult time in their lives transformed and filled with hope and confidence.”

Yawkey Music Clubhouse Director



Teen Discovers the Universal Language of Music

“My passions are playing guitar and drums, breakdancing, and learning and discovering new things, especially engineering.

As a lower class emigrant from Macau who came to the United States at the age of three, knowing no English, *I faced a language barrier with my classmates who ceaselessly attacked me with racism.* I was extremely frustrated that I could not use my voice to defend myself against the constant sneers of “Chinese boy” and mockery of my native language. I learned English quickly in order to adapt, but then it became more difficult for me to speak in Chinese.

Lost and alone in a foreign country, I certainly faced my fair share of obstacles. The only things I knew in life was my family. *My only source of identity was being a “Chinese boy.” That all changed when I was 11-years-old, and I decided to have my first guitar lesson at the Music Clubhouse.*

Guitar soon grew to be my first passion. I began to play it every day, at any opportunity I could find. Guitar was my escape and connection to others. In fact, *playing guitar is what brought me and my best friend together. Like me, he also learned English as a second language.* We bonded over this while practicing the guitar and preparing for many shows at the Music Clubhouse and at the Strand Theatre.



Chi Guitar

Studying the guitar changed Chi's life by giving him an escape from racism, language barriers, and the challenges of being an outsider.

From playing guitar, I immediately learned that I love to make music. Listening to music has always been enjoyable (headphones helped me block off the rest of the world), and *I learned that creating music gave me a sense of bliss.* Soon after learning the guitar, I picked up the drums at the Music Clubhouse. Now, I work at the Clubhouse teaching guitar and drums to younger members. Chords and melodies are one language that everyone can understand and appreciate.

I love all of my passions because they allowed me to recreate myself. Even though I had so little to begin with, I was able to become someone I am proud of. *The most important lesson for me is that one can achieve great things even when being dealt poor cards. I carry this with me every day. Through every obstacle and whatever the circumstances, I know that I will find success and happiness.*”

Songwriting Reveals Young Woman's Inner Strength

Kristiana has been involved with the Music Clubhouse for nearly half of her life. She points to an instrument-themed puzzle still hanging on the wall that she helped put together at 12-years-old. At that time, when Kristiana first followed a friend in to the music room, she was shy and insecure, even though she had natural vocal talent.

The Music Clubhouse– which has since expanded its size and scope through its partnership with Music & Youth– opened doors for Kristiana that she never could have imagined– from forming a band, to participating in a music event with the Red Sox, to being accepted to the prestigious Berklee College City Music Program.

But perhaps the most important door that the Music Clubhouse opened was to her inner strength.

“Music became a positive coping skill, rather than the negative ones I had been using. At that time, I had nowhere to turn, and so I turned here,” says Kristiana.

Kristiana was privately battling anxiety and depression and was experiencing other struggles in her personal life. The Music Clubhouse was a safe space for her where “people were just ready to listen without judgment,” she says. A mentor at the Music Clubhouse showed her how to write down what she was feeling and then develop those words into lyrics. Kristiana speaks proudly about how the songwriting process gave her a voice to express herself and how performing on stage and recording a finished song gave her new confidence.



Kristiana Songwriting & Voice

*Kristiana's personal demons
were no match for the voice
she was given
at the Music Clubhouse.*

“Songwriting taught me how to say what I want. Now I feel like I have the ability to express myself in different ways. And it's really helped me advocate for myself throughout the years.”

That confidence stays with her today. Kristiana is a poised and well-spoken college student with a clear direction. She is on her way to completing a dual licensing and double-degree program in Elementary and Special Education.

“I decided I wanted to do something to help people. I realized I wanted to be the type of person who was there for me when I was younger.”

Kristiana's relationship with the Music Clubhouse and its music program is ongoing. She has been invited back to perform at Open Mic Nights, she visits the Clubhouse regularly on college breaks, and she stays in touch with the mentors from her youth.

“I've grown up here, and this is like my second family. I'll be 21 soon, and this is still one of my comfort places.”

First Guitar Lesson Breaks Through Barriers

Almost every day since joining the Boys & Girls Club, 11-year-old Manuel stood by the window to the Music Clubhouse. As he peered in, he was transfixed by the electric guitar. What the Music Clubhouse staff knew of Manuel was that he recently moved to the U.S. and only spoke Spanish. Because it was difficult for him to communicate with his peers, he had a hard time making friends and joining the activities around the Club.

The Music Clubhouse Director decided it was time to change that.

One day, the Director approached Manuel and managed to ask him in very broken Spanish if he wanted to learn how to play the guitar. Manuel eagerly nodded yes.

Despite the significant language barrier, the Clubhouse Director used gestures and the little Spanish he knew to explain the fret numbers of a guitar so Manuel could start to play songs. Armed with this basic foundation of guitar instruction, Manuel immediately began feeling welcome, important, and empowered.



Manuel Guitar

The Music Director could tell by the way that Manuel looked at the electric guitar that he was interested in playing. It didn't matter that they didn't speak the same language... music was the only language they needed.

"I saw Manuel change very quickly from being shy and less involved at the club to being one of our most enthusiastic and charismatic members," explains the Music Clubhouse Director. "Since he picked up a guitar and started hanging around the Clubhouse, Manuel has continued to hold a sense of pride and belonging. He also learned English in about 4 months. He seems to be at peace with his new life in America, and I'm glad to see him making friends and finding his path to success and happiness in the Club."

Now several months later, Manuel has learned many songs and is working almost every day on mastering the blues. His aunt is saving money to buy him an electric guitar.

For Manuel himself, the story is straightforward and powerful. *"When I came to America, everything was different from my life before in the Dominican Republic: my house, food, language. It wasn't very long until I saw that there were many opportunities for me here to make art, use computers, and especially to play guitar."*

Teen With Autism Finds Creative and Social Outlet

The therapeutic elements of music can change a person's life. Such is the case of Erika, a 16-year-old girl with autism.

When Erika initially came to the music therapy class, she displayed a clear love of music but struggled to maintain safe and appropriate physical boundaries with peers. Through structured music therapy activities, Erika has built the necessary social skills to have success in the group music therapy format. She is now able to engage in a collaborative group music-making process with peers. *The Director of Inclusive Services "considers the opportunity to affect Erika's life in a positive way a real success."*

Her father was kind enough to share his perspective:

"I am writing to express my gratitude for providing my daughter Erika with a great outlet for her musical talent and for giving her an opportunity to express herself and to socialize with others of her own age. She practically runs to the door when it's time for music therapy! While in the class, she participates enthusiastically. Although she is non-verbal, she even tries to sing."



Erika Music Therapy

Imagine being given a voice when you have none. One very grateful father tells of how his non-verbal, autistic daughter has been given the opportunity to sing.

Without this class, she would not have any local outlet for her creativity and certainly nothing during the school week. She would not be able to socialize with other autistic teens. Chances for recreation during the week just don't exist.

I highly recommend this program to other parents when the opportunity presents itself. I cannot express how much happier Erika has become in the past year since we learned about this music class."

Student Hears Music in a New Way

11-year-old Wendell used to feel limited because he is partially deaf and mute. Almost every day after school, he and his brother just played video games and watched TV. Occasionally he'd go outside to play alone with no friends. All of that changed for Wendell when he joined the Studio Clubhouse at his YMCA. He quickly made friends and became very loved by his peers, who helped him achieve his goals in the Studio.

Wendell's journey at the Studio Clubhouse has been unique. At first, he spent most of his time listening to music by himself; his hearing aids allowed him to hear enough to follow the verses and emulate the sounds with his mouth. Soon after, however, Wendell started participating with the other youth as they would gather for karaoke or just to sing popular songs all together, with the microphones amplifying their voices. He enjoyed singing and performing with the group and also as a solo performer.

Eventually, Wendell also found an interest in the recording process. This came as a pleasant surprise to his Clubhouse Director.

"Initially, I would approach him when he was just listening to music and show him a few tricks on the recording software,



Wendell Audio Recording

Recording technology paved the way for a hearing-impaired child to create music and also create lasting friendships.

like how to play with loops. But he did not show any interest in what I was doing," he said. "Then one day he called me over and asked me to listen to what he was working on."

What Wendell had created was a combination of audio track and loops using sounds he recorded of people playing in the Studio. Since then, Wendell has continued to explore and learn the recording technology. He is confident in working by himself but also very comfortable collaborating and performing with his peers.

Through his experiences at the Studio Clubhouse, Wendell has become a young man who is not limited by his disabilities. He has found joy in his new musical skill-set, and more importantly, in his personal relationships.

Music Helps Teen Through Personal Tragedy

When 14-year-old Derrick's mother passed away in 2013, the Studio Clubhouse became something much more important for him than just a place to make music. Previously, Derrick had shown little interest in the music program at the Boys & Girls Club. But faced with a personal tragedy, creating music became a way for Derrick to cope with his complicated and overwhelming emotions of loss and grief.

Derrick learned to express his feelings through his lyrics and performances, a process which has been tremendously therapeutic for him and has helped him begin the healing process.

"There could have been much more destructive and unhealthy ways for him to deal with the passing of his mother," says his Studio Clubhouse Director. "To see him using our studio as a positive and productive way to cope with his loss has been a truly inspiring experience."



Derrick Songwriting

When tragedy struck, Derrick found that music helped him cope and begin to heal.

Derrick continues to use the Studio Clubhouse as a source of healing and success. In addition to working on completing an entire album, Derrick recently performed an original song at the Studio Clubhouse's Mixtape Release Party, as a touching tribute to his mother.

Gaining Fluency in Language, Music, & Culture

When teenager Qiao arrived in the United States from China, she spoke only Cantonese and just a few words of English. She was thrust into a new culture and a new language. Everything was different, unfamiliar, and frightening.

Hoping to find a way to fit in to her new world, Qiao joined the Boys & Girls Club shortly after arriving in Boston. Since she already loved music, Qiao's first stop was the Music Clubhouse. Coincidentally, the Music Clubhouse Director spoke conversational Cantonese! Qiao was thrilled to find someone to speak to at the Clubhouse. This connection proved to be pivotal for her.

Qiao first explored the guitar and then began drum lessons. She also took music theory and ear training classes and excelled at both. She built strong relationships with her mentors who helped her explore these different instruments. Only two months after picking up an instrument for the first time, Qiao performed with an ensemble group at the Clubhouse's Halloween concert. Since then, she has progressed further in her music studies, and she has gained even more confidence to perform in front of her peers and big audiences.



Qiao

Guitar & Drums

Qiao couldn't believe she found a mentor at the Music Clubhouse who spoke Cantonese. This personal connection propelled her into serious study of music and helped her fit in with her English-speaking peers.

Qiao is an exceptional student, both academically and musically. She is highly motivated, practices her music independently, and seeks out information using any resource within reach. Additionally, Qiao is now fluent not only in the English language, but also in the cultural vernacular, fitting right in with her peers. She has built a network of friends who come with her to the Music Clubhouse.

Qiao's participation in the Clubhouse has truly made a difference in helping her adjust to life in America. *"Music and language provided a great conduit for Qiao becoming an American", says her Clubhouse Director.*

Music Heals the Heart

Gabriel brings light and excitement to everyone around him. His positive energy is tangible. His amazing outlook on life turned out to be out very important this past year when Gabriel suffered a heart attack due to a pre-existing condition. Despite this setback, he continued to come faithfully to the Music Clubhouse every day to hang out with his friends and jam on bass with several groups and bands.

Gabriel says, "Music...it's something you can feel. Something you can taste, see, hear, love, and experience. You can almost call it magic instead of music."

When asked what he'd like to do most at the Clubhouse, he said he'd never played through an entire song in a band live on stage. So he did exactly that at a recent Open Mic Night. He was ecstatic!

"At the last Open Mic Night I got to feel the magic by playing a song on stage for the first time, and it felt so amazing!" Gabriel said. "I felt the crowd yelling and giving me wings so that I could soar and fly over everyone as though I was going through the sky. I felt and heard myself on top. It was all worth it, and I'd do anything to fly again. I miss the clouds."

Gabriel Bass

When a teenager suffers a heart attack, his best medicine comes from continuing to pursue his passion for music.

I miss the true spotlight, and most of all I miss my fans. So this is what rock stars feel?!"

Gabriel continues to improve both musically and physically. And with every beat of his heart he appreciates music and the rhythm of the Music Clubhouse more and more.



Growing Through Music and Coping With Life

Casey had been a participant and leader in the Boys & Girls Club for many years, but when his mother recently was diagnosed with advanced lung cancer, he began struggling. With his life turned upside down, he lost his connection and motivation to do the things he had normally enjoyed. Casey stopped coming to the Boys & Girls Club and ended his responsibilities as a junior staff leader.

At this critical point, concerned staff members assigned him a mentor at the Music Clubhouse, since Casey had previously shown an interest in the guitar. Casey's relationship with this mentor began simply by meeting to go over school progress reports, but soon the two were jamming in the Music Clubhouse! *The encouragement and support Casey received kept him coming back, and he went from coming once or twice a month to becoming an everyday Club member.*

Casey's confidence soared as he took music lessons and worked on his own music productions. Casey also became a mentor to younger and less experienced participants, helping them write and produce their own songs.

While the Music Clubhouse staff was thrilled to see Casey becoming more involved, it has continued to be a difficult journey for Casey.

"Casey is still struggling" says the Music Clubhouse Director. "Just the other day he was in my office, scared and crying, as he tried to process all of these emotions. I encouraged him to go home and write some lyrics about it... the result was more than I expected."



Casey Songwriting

After Casey's mother was diagnosed with cancer, the mentor program helped him find music and hope in a difficult time when his life could have turned for the worse.

Casey poured out his emotions and fears regarding his mother's illness into his rap lyrics and songs.

Below is an excerpt from his song, "My Voice."

*I remember that I found out that my mom was really sick.
I couldn't comprehend anything. It wouldn't stick.
My music came around and took it out of my mind,
It went into my brain and took out every sign...
...Of rage, sadness and misery.
No longer will the words that they said be the end of me.
I never thought that cancer would be my enemy,
But it's all-good now knowing music is a friend in me.*

The Music Clubhouse gave Casey a powerful and constructive means of expressing himself during a very difficult time in his life. And his support from his mentor and his new "Music Clubhouse family" gave him hope when there seemed to be none.

"It's still hard on him," says the Music Clubhouse director. "But despite everything that is going on, he continues to be an active member and leader among his peers. He is dedicated to music, his studies, and the Music Clubhouse."

Performer Communicates On and Off the Stage

Victor is a developmentally disabled 15-year-old who has always had an inclination toward music. Over the summer, Victor's mother encouraged him to participate in the Music Clubhouse program at the Boys & Girls Club. After first trying karaoke, Victor was immediately interested in all that the Clubhouse had to offer. He began to attend many music classes, including Sound FX, Recording, Stage Performance, and drum lessons.

Victor truly enjoyed these classes. And more importantly, his study of music had a clear and positive impact on his cognitive and social development. As the summer progressed, Victor's language skills improved noticeably and he communicated with the staff much more frequently.

"I was so impressed with Victor's work in the Music Clubhouse over the summer," said the Director of Visual and Performing Arts. "He was focused and dedicated, and it was incredibly moving to see his progress through the process."



Victor

Vocal Performance

In the "Stage Performance" class, Victor was no longer inhibited by his developmental disabilities. In fact, he emerged triumphant in his new-found confidence.

Victor achieved a new level of self-confidence among his peers. While involved in the Stage Performance class, Victor was asked what song he was most familiar with, and he responded with Miley Cyrus's "Wrecking Ball." The staff worked collaboratively to support him and help him prepare to perform this song.

At the Music Clubhouse's End-of-Summer Extravaganza, Victor triumphantly debuted his solo performance of "Wrecking Ball" in front of nearly 50 audience members, including his mother. The entire Clubhouse marveled at Victor's *"pride in his work, his excitement about performing, and ultimately, how far he had come to get up and perform in front of everyone,"* said his Director.

Victor's solo was filled with emotion, and culminated with Victor engaging the audience and focusing all of his attention on them. After his touching and brave performance, Victor approached his mother, kissed her on the cheek, and said with pride, *"I did it, Mom!"*



Excellence in Music

“We are all very confident we can continue to make a big impact on the Boston music scene, especially because our kids are always being invited to perform.”

Blue Hill Music Clubhouse Director



Rising Star Calls Clubhouse Home

At 11-years-old, Amanda was already on her way to stardom.

After winning the 2014 season of La Voz Kids, the Spanish version of The Voice, Amanda's life went into overdrive. Since her win, she sang at a Red Sox game, hired a business manager, and spent time in the studio developing her first album.

Yet despite the whirlwind, Amanda took the time to stop in to the Music Studio Clubhouse at the YMCA, where this journey began and where she still feels she belongs.

The Studio Clubhouse opened in 2011 in partnership with Music & Youth. "We all worked on it for a year -we knew it would be a good fit," said the YMCA Associate Executive Director.

And it was. The Music Studio attracted urban youth and gave them a place to express themselves through music. It attracted Amanda.

The Music Director said he knew from the minute Amanda walked into the studio that she was special.

"She was shy, but her friend pushed her," he said. The friend told him, "She can really sing!"



Amanda Voice

*Amanda now has fame and
a recording contract.
However, she still feels connected
to the Studio Clubhouse
where she got her start
and filmed her audition video.*

*Amanda sang that day and everyday thereafter
in the Studio Clubhouse. It's where she filmed her
audition video that earned her a spot on La Voz
Kids.*

While Amanda has shot to fame through her connection to the Clubhouse, she is not the only young musician to find her footing there. For every Amanda there are five more kids simply having fun, learning a skill, and becoming inspired to try harder in other aspects of their lives.

The YMCA Associate Executive Director said that's because the Clubhouse isn't just about music. It's also about mentoring and partnerships between kids and community. It can sometimes lead to stardom and sometimes just give kids a place that feels like home.

Building Confidence Through Music

If you want to witness the transformative power of music, just meet Javon.

Nearly a decade ago, a shy 10-year-old Javon peeked into a small, cluttered room which was serving as the music space at the Boys & Girls Club. Javon thought he might want to play the drums. Inside the room was a volunteer music instructor from Berklee named Rick, who just happened to be a drummer. From that moment forward, Rick and Javon began working together not only on playing music, but also on the skills that would make Javon a confident person.

Yet almost as quickly as their relationship began, it appeared it may have to end; Rick would soon be graduating college, and the fledgling music program might close.

Fortunately, Music & Youth partnered with the Boys & Girls Club to help create, equip and staff a 1,000 square foot state-of-the-art Music Clubhouse and hire Rick as the full time director.



Javon

Songwriting & Stage Performance

When bad timing threatened the mentorship that helped make Javon a musician, Music & Youth stepped in. Javon's continued successes are proof of the significance of this investment.

Javon thrived at the Clubhouse, learning so much more than just music. He found his voice and became a role model to younger members.

"I know how hard it is for people around me who have talent to have a place to express themselves," said Javon. "This is something I will never take for granted."

Now at the University of Massachusetts, Javon is no longer shy. He is a confident young man who recently performed in front of 50,000 people at City Hall Plaza in Boston and opened for the hip-hop star B.o.B at Colgate University.

Javon looks back at the Music Clubhouse as a place he considers his second home. As he explains, *"It's just been a great place for me. I really live in here."*

Commitment and Persistence Pay Off

At age 13, Carissa has already learned that success isn't measured by winning 1st place, but rather by one's dedication and commitment to the challenge.

Two years ago, when Carissa joined the Music Clubhouse, she already displayed great musical talent and loved singing. When she competed in the Clubhouse singing competition early on, she had little performance experience, yet still received the 2nd place prize and the audience vote. Nonetheless, she was incredibly disappointed at not having won 1st place and briefly became disengaged from her commitment to singing.

With the encouragement of the Music Clubhouse staff, however, Carissa made the mature and confident decision to re-engage in her voice lessons, and she jumped at every opportunity to perform. Carissa's dedication has paid off tremendously. In 2014, she entered the Clubhouse singing competition and won by a unanimous vote. Over the summer, Carissa attended a college-sponsored music program, and she has since been admitted to a prestigious performing arts high school.



Carissa

Voice

Second place was so disappointing for Carissa that she almost gave up on her passion. Over time, however, she learned that enjoying her music was as rewarding as winning first place.

The Music Clubhouse Director also reports that *Carissa continues to pursue music studies and performances at the Clubhouse and “recently brought the house down as the final act in the Music Clubhouse’s Annual Pop Show!”*

Most importantly, Carissa exhibited that persistence in the face of a challenge can be incredibly rewarding. *“Being a part of the Music Clubhouse has been a really good experience because I have gotten a chance to demonstrate my individual talent,” says Carissa. “And it’s also a safe place where I am not afraid to show others what I have.”*

Youth Musician Leads by Example

Joshua's love of music propelled him to the Music Clubhouse four years ago at the start of 9th grade. *"Music is life to me. It can take me somewhere that nothing else can. I'm happier when I'm playing music than if I had a million dollars."*

The supportive staff, positive environment, and variety of programming have kept Joshua actively engaged ever since, and he has grown both musically and as a leader. *"Because of the Clubhouse I'm more outgoing and more open-minded," says Joshua. "The staff encourages me to speak at events and perform a lot."*

This year, in addition to building his skills on the keyboard and other instruments, Joshua also has taken on a leadership role with the esteemed Latin Jazz Ensemble at the Music Clubhouse. His position within the Ensemble involves setting up for performances, completing sound checks, planning rehearsals, and helping guide the group's decisions about performance set-lists.

"Joshua is passionate, dedicated, and motivates others to succeed," says the Music Director.



Joshua
Keyboard

This musically accomplished teen is sharing his secret with younger musicians: Practice every day.

In addition to his leadership in the Latin Jazz Ensemble, Joshua also has become a role model to younger Clubhouse members. He provides support for Saturday community classes for youth, ages 10-18, and mentors less experienced music students as they build their skills.

"Joshua always tells them that if they want to improve, they need to practice a lot and commit to playing every day," says the Music Director. "He shares his own experience of his hard work in order to progress from playing by ear to reading music and understanding composition."

Joshua's hard work has indeed paid off. Joshua was awarded a music scholarship to attend a prestigious summer performance program in Boston. He also recently graduated from high school and will begin college in the Fall, studying in a music degree program. Joshua hopes to then transfer to a music university to complete his B.A. degree and eventually pursue a career in music.

Clubhouse Alumni Change How You Experience Music

Nearly 10 years ago at the Music Clubhouse, five teens started learning music and performing together. Those same musicians now make up a five-piece Alternative/Progressive rock band called The Nine Choirs that gives fans a very unique interactive experience by pairing a comic book series with their original music.

Band members Eddy (guitar/lead vocals), Jacob (guitar), Gabriel (bass), Victor (drums), and Abimael (keys) established their friendship at the Music Clubhouse. Their friendship continues to be the foundation of their creative energy. And even now, despite their busy schedules that include work and college, these Music Clubhouse Alumni regularly find time to return to the Music Clubhouse to mentor young participants.

“The most significant characteristic I learned at the Music Clubhouse was perseverance,” said band member Eddy. “This project has taken two years so far, and I’ve had to work through creative differences with band members all while working and going to school. I learned how to deal with all of

The Nine Choirs

Alternative Rock Band
(Alumni)

They met at the Music Clubhouse as kids. Now adults, their friendship and musical inclinations have brought them together again to form an innovative band.

these situations at the Music Clubhouse because it was basically the same there.”

The Nine Choirs was established two years ago by Eddy, Jacob, and their friend, Evan, who started the collaboration together by writing an original fantasy story. In the spirit of this creative beginning, the band plans to engage its audience by combining original music, lyrics, and performances with a supplemental comic book series. Fans will have an interactive experience, as the music is based on the characters and storyline described in the books.

The Nine Choirs band members are finishing their debut EP and are currently working on their second album. Their next step is to complete the original comic book series, play more shows, and revolutionize how music fans listen to and experience music.



Musical Phenom Blossoms in His Community

Jason comes from a Brazilian family with a deep love of community, so it was natural that he would be a regular participant at the Boys & Girls Club. His first involvement with the Club was in the Sports and Fitness program. Then Jason discovered the Music Clubhouse.

With encouragement from Music Clubhouse staff, at the age of 11 he began taking drum classes. Jason loved playing the drums, and within a short time he was hooked on music! He soon discovered the bass, which became his primary focus. Jason was in the Music Clubhouse every day working hard to learn new skills and make progress in his lessons. After less than a year at the Music Clubhouse, he was playing with high school students in the ensemble band.

One day as part of a workshop, a professional band visited the Music Clubhouse. When they saw Jason play, every single band member leaned in to the Clubhouse Director and said, "He is amazing!"

Jason's ability was immediately obvious to the pros. He was clearly a natural musician.



Jason Bass

Jason's natural talent has gotten the attention of his mentors, his community, and even a professional band.

Jason's innate talent to learn any song on any instrument is hugely strengthened by his enthusiasm and commitment. With this winning combination, he has become a leader and mentor to other students at the Music Clubhouse. He even was able to teach a group of kids the very difficult song, "Sweet Child of Mine," by Guns N' Roses. He single-handedly taught each kid on each instrument!

Jason's parents are incredibly supportive and proud of his musical talents. They attend every performance – anytime, anywhere. They have formed bonds with other Brazilian parents and encouraged their children to join the Music Clubhouse. Jason's dad promotes the music.

Jason's involvement in the Music Clubhouse is not only enhancing his exceptional musical talent, but it is reinforcing the strong community that encouraged him to pursue music in the first place.



Developing Leadership

“I am lucky and privileged to have the opportunity to work at the Music Clubhouse. I don’t know many people who love what they do, especially for their first job! Helping a club member complete her first song was amazing. I immediately felt a sense of joy overcome me knowing that my hard work contributed to that moment.”

Kira

Music Clubhouse Youth Leader



Talented Teen Becomes Performer, Leader, Teacher

Jay's passion for playing guitar began at age 12 in Santiago, Dominican Republic, where he lived at the time. He found a mentor in the public park who taught him all types of guitar styles, including rock, punk, merengue, classical, and jazz.

When Jay moved to the United States in 2014, his cousin introduced him to the Music Clubhouse, and he immediately fit right in. Sharing a common love of music, *Jay says, "I made a lot of friends with musicians who were my age."*

Opportunities came quickly for Jay to perform and exercise his talent. He practiced with other Clubhouse participants, formed several small ensembles, and performed at Music Clubhouse community events. Furthermore, Jay volunteered as an assistant guitar and drum instructor, all within his first year at the Clubhouse. *According to Jay, the Music Clubhouse became "a second home for me."*

The opportunities for Jay have only expanded since then. He is the vanguard of the Music Clubhouse's hottest new band, "La4ence," a 4-piece ensemble that performs at Clubhouse shows and at local and regional events.



Jay

Youth Leader / Guitar

This bilingual guitar player- who took his first guitar lessons in a park- was the perfect candidate for a youth leader, combining professionalism, talent, and kindness.

Recently, in addition to being enrolled as a senior in the Business, Management & Finance program at his local public high school, Jay has been selected as the Music Clubhouse's new Youth Leader. According to the Music Clubhouse Director, *Jay was chosen for this position because of "his musical expertise, the initiative he displayed early on to teach and mentor younger Music Clubhouse participants, his professional demeanor, his respectful and warm personality, and his fluency in Spanish and English."*

Jay is clearly qualified for his role as Youth Leader in every way, and *he immediately showed how deserving he was by "bolstering all of our lesson plans with his mindful and patient teaching style,"* says the Music Clubhouse Director.

Jay reaffirms how great this experience has been for him. *"I look forward to going to the Music Clubhouse because I can play music, help teach younger musicians, practice with my band, perform at concerts in the community, and just hang out and have a good time with my friends. Music is an important part of my life. I love to play and always will. Music is my life."*

Becoming a Leader While Supporting His Family

For Marcus, an 18-year-old high school senior, having a job is a necessity. *“He has to work to help support his family,” says his Clubhouse Director.* However, Marcus feels incredibly fortunate that his first job - as a Youth Leader at the Studio Clubhouse - offers much more than just a paycheck. He knows his position in the Youth Leader Program is giving him opportunities to further his education, have a positive impact on his peers, and learn real-world business and money-management skills.

“I wanted to become more business-minded about my music and my responsibilities,” reflects Marcus.

Working closely with the Clubhouse Director, Marcus performs administrative tasks for the Clubhouse, including deciding what equipment is needed, helping build and manage the Clubhouse budget, and placing the final equipment orders.

Additionally, Marcus’s on-the-job training has helped develop his technical skills on sophisticated recording software used by professional recording studios to create original music. *“I educated myself on everything I needed to know to help me be successful,” says Marcus.*



Marcus

Youth Leader / Recording

The Youth Leader position was Marcus’s job. He never expected that he’d end up considering it training for life.

“I learned fast, and that was beneficial for my workplace because I was able help and teach as soon as possible.”

Marcus’s music technology skills have given him confidence professionally as he strives to mentor younger participants. The Clubhouse Director reflects, *“Communication is by far the area that Marcus has shown the most progress in. He has really pushed himself to break out of his shell and interact with his peer club members and club staff.”*

Marcus agrees. *“I feel like I’ve made an impact on more than one member, which is a great accomplishment for me! I enjoy setting good examples for younger kids. I also enjoy being a leader and a role model. There is a great feeling that you get when you see how you have impacted someone and when someone looks up to you.”*

A Leader Emerges: a Musical and Cultural Exchange

Leo joined the Boys & Girls Club when his family came to the U.S. from the Dominican Republic. After discovering the Music Clubhouse, he quickly expressed an interest in learning to play the guitar. Leo began to work with a band member, Elin, to master the guitar, which he was able to do despite the language barrier.

Leo has been exposed to new musical styles – rock, reggae, and funk. He also has been influential in introducing Music Clubhouse members to Caribbean styles of music like Bachata and Merengue. Last winter, Leo was able to showcase his rhythm guitar skills when he joined the Music Clubhouse Band to perform two songs during the Clubhouse's 3rd annual Pop Show.

Leo's continued involvement in the Music Clubhouse proved to be not only a musical exchange, but also a cultural one. As Leo persisted with his study of music, he achieved a significant proficiency in the English language. And in turn, the Music Clubhouse director's own Spanish-language skills have improved tremendously as a direct result of working closely with Leo.



Leo

Youth Leader / Guitar

Leo learned the English language as he simultaneously learned to play the guitar. His rapid progress proved valuable both to him and to his mentor, who unexpectedly became more fluent in Spanish through the process.

“Today Leo is employed as a Youth Leader at the Clubhouse teaching guitar lessons and working closely with younger youth,” says the Clubhouse director.

As a Youth Leader, Leo is also responsible for completing a certain number of hours of personal development in academics. *He has used this commitment to help him continue to improve his English language skills and prepare for the SATs and applications to college.*

For Leo, the Music Clubhouse has provided so much more than the opportunity to study music. It has helped him improve his communication skills and has given him the invaluable experience of being a leader.

Youth Leader is the Complete Package

Khamari is a shining example of how the Youth Leader Program is having a tremendous impact on the participants at the Music Clubhouse and also influencing the Leaders' own personal growth.

When you speak with Khamari, it's clear that he is developing valuable professional skills and leadership characteristics. Among the many skills he's gained, some notable ones are creativity and adaptability.

He reflects, *"My creativity was often exercised when I had more students than I thought I would for a vocal lesson. Instead of planning for an individual lesson, I had to adapt and tailor the lesson for a large group so that it was a productive experience and everyone felt like they were learning."*

Since the initial Youth Leader session in the Fall of 2011, Khamari worked as a Youth Leader a total of seven sessions, showing his extreme dedication to the Clubhouse. In an essay he wrote, *Khamari shares that, "every time I commit to the Youth Leader Program, I commit myself to another opportunity for growth, learning, leadership, and hard work. I also get to help people my age grow as musicians and people."*

It is this consistency of serving as a Youth Leader that has allowed Khamari deeper self-reflection and professional



Khamari

Youth Leader / Voice

Khamari worked as a Youth Leader for 4 years-longer than anyone else. He considers himself a better musician and leader because of it.

maturity. Perhaps the most significant insight is that Khamari understands how being a role model impacts his peers.

"There isn't very much of an age gap between us, so I can relate to these people, and that makes my job—and our learning experiences—so much more fun, and a lot easier."

In addition to working at the Clubhouse, Youth Leaders are also expected to manage many additional after-school responsibilities. For Khamari—who is an accomplished musician and singer-songwriter, performs with the Boston Children's Choir, and also records his own music—the Youth Leader experience has taught him how to balance these responsibilities in a productive way.

"It's helped me to solve many communication problems I had at home. For example, instead of relying on my mother to remember all of my chores and concert dates, I now take ownership of remembering my own schedule."

Through dedication and hard work, Khamari has become a role model, a leader, and a working professional.

Youth Leader Shines in the Real World

Diego began participating at the Music Clubhouse as a bass guitar student. At age 16, he became a Youth Leader and started spending much of his time helping younger students learn just as he had – from caring staff at the Clubhouse.

At the conclusion of his Youth Leader program he reflected, *“I feel I have a better understanding of the fact that people learn differently and at different speeds. My job is to change how I teach to fit the needs of my student. I found a joy in teaching that I had not found with anything else. I have come to love teaching music and I have decided to go to college for music education.”*

A year after his job as Youth Leader ended, Diego was actively working on his goal. He was finishing his second semester as a sociology major in college, with plans to change to the music education major within the next year.

Music has remained a big part of his life, as he enjoys playing in bands and continuing to mentor at the Music Clubhouse. The year of professional development as a Youth Leader influenced many decisions he has made on campus. In addition to his school work, Diego has participated in community service projects with his fraternity while also balancing a work-study job at the registrar’s office.



Diego

Youth Leader / Bass

As he headed to college, former Youth Leader, Diego, realized that he wanted to pursue music education. His work at the Music Clubhouse positioned him to follow his dreams.

“I worked hard on those characteristics as a Youth Leader, and as a result I knew how to prepare for my job interview and how to present myself,” says Diego. “Because my first job was a Youth Leader I had the experience and was confident going into my interview.”

Diego is still motivated by this journey. *“Being in college is like when I came to the Music Clubhouse for the first time,” he says. “Initially I was a participant taking lessons, then I started to volunteer and mentor the younger kids. Then I got my dream job as the Music Clubhouse Youth Leader!”*

When his former Music Clubhouse Director asked him what his goals are after he graduates from college, Diego responded, “They haven’t changed. I want YOUR job! I want to be a Music Clubhouse Director!”

A Big Shift From Trouble

16-year-old Micah had a history of trouble in school and with the law. By chance, he heard about a local youth development organization in his neighborhood and went there to apply to their leadership program. The coordinator talked to him about his interest in writing music and encouraged him to visit the Music Clubhouse.

That same day, Micah sat in on a songwriting session and was immediately inspired to write along with the other youth. Although he initially struggled with the writing skills, telling his story came naturally. In his incredible original song, he speaks about his challenges in life and about how much he wants something better.

*"Listen, this is a message for all the young people,
Who are out on the streets walking down a bad path,
So that they understand that everything in life has a solution."*

Micah made the commitment to be involved in both the leadership and music programs, dedicating many hours each week to being there.



Micah

Youth Leader / Songwriting

*Storytelling through songwriting took
Micah off the streets. His reinvented
self took him to new heights
as a Youth Leader.*

He started participating nearly every day, spending from 4:00-6:00pm in the Youth Leader Program and then from 6:00-7:30pm in the Music Clubhouse. He was always careful to leave on time so as not to miss his curfew at home.

"The Music Clubhouse has helped to bring about a big shift in Micah's life," says the Music Clubhouse Director.

Micah had found an outlet through which to express his innate musical talents. Through his dedication and commitment to these programs, Micah was beginning to develop his leadership and literacy skills. And most importantly, he was staying off the streets.

Music, Empathy, and Support Help Shape Leader

Selma was always quiet and very shy. When she first came in to the Music Clubhouse, she stayed with her mother. Selma began taking voice, piano, and guitar lessons at the Clubhouse, but the lessons alone did not bring Selma out of her shell.

One day, her Music Clubhouse Director heard Selma singing in the hallway while waiting for her activities to begin. *“I was really impressed by her potential as a singer,” she said. She also noted that Selma was really supportive of her peers at the Clubhouse.*

Inspired by Selma’s talent and her positive attitude, her Clubhouse Director approached Selma and offered her an opportunity to increase her responsibility in the Music Clubhouse as Youth Leader during the summer. She was confident that Selma would bring a lot of experience as a regular member of the Clubhouse and that she would be a comfortable, familiar face for the teens.

“Selma was shocked when I approached her with this role,” says her Clubhouse Director. “She reminded me that she was shy, and she was not sure people would listen to her.”



Selma

Youth Leader / Voice

When she started attending lessons at the Music Clubhouse, Selma was so shy she stayed by her mother’s side. By summer’s end, she taught a voice class by herself.

But with the support of the Clubhouse staff, Selma decided she was up for the challenge. Her job as a Youth Leader was to support the teen Clubhouse participants while developing her own ability as a leader. In a few short weeks, Selma was showing signs that she was gaining confidence in her role as a Youth Leader. She would give advice to other vocalists, showing them how to improve their songwriting and sound quality. She was reaching out to shy members of the team and, through empathy, helping them overcome their fears.

Eventually, Selma was taking on even greater challenges. For example, one day when an instructor was busy helping another teen, Selma was asked to warm up the vocalists and run a rehearsal. Selma was truly stunned to be asked, but she was determined to rise to the occasion, and she did an amazing job.

Everyone at the Clubhouse is very proud of Selma’s achievements. *“It has been great to see her blossom,” says her Director. “I am excited to continue to use her support and to see her continue to grow.”*



Academic Achievement

*“He has shown unparalleled improvement...
It is no small joy as a teacher to discover
a student with such a voracious and
passionate appetite for learning.”*

Jordan eMusic Clubhouse Director



Making Honor Roll by Making Music

Two years ago, Karla was struggling academically and behaviorally. Her first marking period grades were all D's, and she had become disengaged from both school and from the programs at the Boys & Girls Club. Karla was placed in the dropout prevention program called "Be Great: Graduate" and was paired with the Boys & Girls Club's Director of Visual & Performing Arts as her mentor. She was also placed in her middle school's support program, "Success," which meets daily to help students develop critical study skills to keep them on track academically and socially.

When Karla's mentor encouraged her to explore some new activities at the Boys & Girls Club, she began to work with the vocal instructor at the Music Clubhouse. Karla soon became fully committed to her voice lessons and to learning proper vocal technique. As she progressed in her study of voice, she gained more self-confidence and began to perform more, including a performance near her former home in Brazil.

Through her participation in the Music Clubhouse, along with the targeted academic support from the Boys & Girls Club staff, Karla grew tremendously. By the second half of the school year, Karla was fully engaged in her studies. She was no longer a D-student – in fact, she made honor roll!



Karla Voice

The Music Clubhouse and its mentors did everything they could to make sure this young student didn't slip through the cracks. Karla's honor roll status was proof that everyone's hard work (especially hers) paid off.

Following that pivotal school year, Karla lived in Brazil with family for a little while. Upon returning to the U.S., she quickly jumped back in to the Music Clubhouse both as a musician and as a volunteer.

"Karla continues to study vocals and piano," says the Music Clubhouse Director. "She also has become an important support for me and for the Clubhouse by providing help in the Music Clubhouse and by setting up for special events."

The winning combination of dedicated mentors, exposure to music, and Karla's own hard work resulted in the best possible outcome. "I'm on track with my singing *and* my school work!" says Karla. Indeed, she is an honors student and musician who is now contributing on many levels to the programs that helped turn her life around.

Commitment to Music Leads to Academic Success

17-year-old Aria is a true example of what the Music Clubhouse is all about. It's a place not only to study and experience music, but it also provides the tools for success in all areas of life. Since she began attending the Music Clubhouse, Aria has demonstrated significant improvement in school. Additionally, she has become more committed, focused, and goal-oriented in the Music Clubhouse and beyond.

"The Music Clubhouse is my safe haven," says Aria. "When I am here, I feel safe and I can open up in my music and connect to the staff. When I step in the room, I feel free from the chains of the outside world."

Aria truly put herself in the position to get the most out of the Clubhouse. According to the Music Clubhouse Director, *"Aria is consistent in accepting musical challenges and setting personal goals to achieve. Recently, she has been one of our featured recording artists in the studio. Aria's pursuit of excellence is reflected in her diligence in the studio. She spent hours making sure her recorded parts were recorded well and would not settle for second best in her performance."*



Aria Recording Artist

Aria went from struggling student to "Student of the Month." She attributes her improvement to the life-skills she acquired at the Music Clubhouse.

Aria's commitment to hard work at the Clubhouse has transferred to other areas of her life. Recently Aria was awarded "Student of the Month" at her school. This represented a tremendous academic achievement and a notable improvement from prior performance at school. *"Aria credits the shift to an increase in concentration and motivation in herself to succeed," says the Music Clubhouse Director.*

"Aria's outstanding performance and change at the Music Clubhouse is a mere reflection of the goal of this entire organization-- to inspire and enable a young person's true potential. In recent months, we have seen that truth come to life in both the person and musician Aria is becoming."

Music Propels Teen All the Way to College

When Andre joined the Music Clubhouse during his junior year in high school, his grades were poor and he showed little interest in academic success. At the Clubhouse, he was an immediate and regular presence, and he loved guitar lessons. He exhibited an enormous commitment and passion for music and for improving his guitar skills. He soon became a featured guitarist in the Music Clubhouse band.

As Andre became dedicated to his study of music and his involvement in the Clubhouse grew, he began to develop greater self-confidence and motivation. As a result, his academic studies improved.

Andre became a Youth Leader at the Music Clubhouse at the beginning of his senior year. He continued to participate and excel in music and also showed continued improvement in school.

“The Music Clubhouse provided a turning point for Andre,” says the Clubhouse Director.



Andre

Youth Leader / Guitar

Music had always captured Andre's attention. At the Music Clubhouse, he realized that there was room for both music and academic excellence in his life.

At the end of his senior year, Andre earned a Citizenship Award and the Music Clubhouse Award at the club's "End-of-the-Year Extravaganza."

Even more significantly, Andre was admitted to the freshman class at a prestigious private University, where he plans to continue his music education, studying sound design and music production.



Personal Growth

“He has spent nearly every single afternoon in the studio. During this time, I was fortunate to witness his personal growth in terms of his social interactions, positive feelings about school, and overall improved behavior around the club.”

Waltham Studio Clubhouse Director



Teen Embraces Music Experience & Changes Course

If you could see Noel now, you'd never believe that he had a history of significant behavior problems. But a few years ago, staff at the Boys & Girls Club had to intervene often. They had to send him home repeatedly, due to his disruptive and inappropriate behavior. That all changed when Noel started attending the Music Clubhouse.

Over the past year-and-a-half, Noel has become an extremely active member of the Clubhouse. He writes lyrics regularly at the Clubhouse and at home in his music book; he participates in many performances, including the Boys & Girls Club Music Awards; and he played a huge role in completing the Clubhouse's album, "Summer Smash." Most recently, he wrote and recorded his own original song entitled, "New Me." *According to the Clubhouse Director, this recording "was a big success and a landmark in his progress."* The lyrics are powerful.

*"Sometimes there's grief. I'm ready to move on;
'Cause this is my song, but where did I go wrong;
When everybody thought I was a gangsta, I'm not even a prangsta...
It's the new me, it's the fresh me everyday."*



Noel

Songwriter & Performer

Noel was a kid who was getting into trouble. Lots of it. Then he started writing his own songs, finding a more healthy way to communicate. He felt a sense of responsibility and confidence. He was transformed.

Just as importantly, Noel has gained respect from the other Clubhouse members as one of the best emcees and performers in the program. He is now a frequent collaborator and a resource for others members, helping them with their songs. This has given Noel a tremendous sense of identity and responsibility at the Club.

"He communicates more now than ever before, and he has more friends than ever before," says the Clubhouse Music Director. "He's doing so well that I felt comfortable allowing him to run the music production software in the recording studio on his own!"

Through his involvement with the Music Clubhouse, Noel has grown into a responsible young man and no longer exhibits significant behavioral issues at the Club.

"Watching this transformation," says the Clubhouse Director, "has been one of the highlights of my time here."

Teen Expands Musical Horizons

For Jami, age 16, music quickly and deeply became a part of her life as soon as she started attending the Music Clubhouse. At first, she was timid and unsure of her musical ability, but in just a matter of months, she was performing her own original songs for others!

Of course, this transformation didn't come without a tremendous amount of drive and determination. Early on, Jami expressed the desire to grow musically. She took voice lessons and eventually became a part of the Clubhouse vocal ensemble. Then, she wanted more.

She expanded her musical range by studying guitar and writing music. *"I just wanted to expand my horizons and not be limited in music," says Jami.* She also showed her commitment by having perfect attendance at her lessons and ensemble rehearsals, arriving early and staying until it was time to close the building.

"I have learned the value of responsibility through making sure to arrive on time for lessons and following through with performance commitments. I pay attention in lessons in order to take in as much musical knowledge as possible."



Jami

Voice, Guitar, & Songwriting

Jami used every resource in the Music Clubhouse to learn all aspects of music. In the process, she discovered she could be a musician and a role model to her peers.

By the end of her first semester, Jami was performing her own songs for an audience. More importantly, says her Music Clubhouse Director, *"Jami has become a role model for her peers, who all want to either work with her or perform with her."*

Jami is proud of being a positive influence on other youth in the program. *"I want to be able to be a role model to others about not giving up on their dreams and knowing that they can go as far as they allow themselves to go."*

Jami is still progressing and performing regularly in front of audiences, including at an Open Mic night where she spontaneously joined the Music Clubhouse staff in a performance. Needless to say, the Clubhouse staff is very proud of her.

"Jami is a lovely young woman with much to offer the world with her music," says the Music Clubhouse Director. "She has brought me to tears with the depth of feeling she puts into performing pieces she has written and performed. I look forward to seeing her continue to grow musically and share it with others."

Clubhouse Brings Out Best in Teen With Autism

The social constructs of school have never been kind to 13-year-old Aaron, who has high functioning autism. A frequent victim of bullying, Aaron struggled to fit in and often acted out and tried to leave school.

Much to everyone's amazement, Aaron doesn't display any of the same social and behavioral problems at the Music Clubhouse. In fact, he thrives there. *"Aaron performs regularly at open mics and practices bass and drums with instructors and peers," says the Music Clubhouse Director. "He is making friends and feeling accepted."*

In addition to his participation in the music programming, Aaron recently started his own radio show based out of the Music Clubhouse. *In his show, he offers "commentaries of hilarious nonsensical interviews and critiques of life in general," says the Clubhouse Director.*



Aaron

Bass, Drums, & Radio

Aaron was a victim of bullying at school. You'd never know that from his demeanor at the Music Clubhouse, where he even runs his own radio show.

Aaron's mother, Rosa, is incredibly grateful for the support that the Music Clubhouse provides to Aaron. She often expresses how astonishingly well Aaron participates and grows there, in stark contrast to his past experiences in school.

Aaron's involvement at the Music Clubhouse has helped improve his coping skills at school, and Aaron's mother uses time at the Music Clubhouse as a positive incentive for good behavior.

It is clear to everyone, especially those closest to Aaron, that there is something special about the Music Clubhouse that brings out the very best in him!

Inspiring Words From an Inspired Teen

Hanging on the wall of the Studio Clubhouse is a letter imploring members to *“Become famous, write songs, produce beats and sing, sing, SING.”*

The letter was written by 14-year-old Tanya who was a regular at the Clubhouse until she moved to Texas for family reasons. Tanya, who has since returned home to Massachusetts, said she was devastated at the thought of leaving the Clubhouse.

“I was extremely attached to the music studio,” she said. “It really opened up a part of me I didn’t know existed before. I began learning [music software] programs.”

That allowed her to write and produce her first song, “Little Sallie.” It also, in a sense, set her free.

Tanya’s Clubhouse Director said that once she wrote that first song, Tanya got serious, creating other original songs and beats.

Then came the news that she would have to leave, and emotions ran high for everyone leading up to Tanya’s departure. She had become a force at the Clubhouse, and the letter she left behind urged her friends to carry on without her.



Tanya Songwriting

When Tanya moved away, she left a touching message to all of her peers and mentors at the Studio Clubhouse. When she moved back, the Clubhouse was her first stop.

“Make the song the way you want it to be, sing it the way you like, and play it the way you feel comfortable with,” she wrote. “That’s what the Studio Clubhouse is for.”

Tanya said she began to adjust to life in Texas, but she still missed the Clubhouse. Then word came from her sister - there was a plane ticket back to Massachusetts and a home with her aunt if she wanted it.

Tanya said when she came back into the studio, the YMCA’s Assistant Executive Director’s jaw dropped.

“I pretty much got that reaction from everyone,” she said smiling.

“If I wasn’t here, I don’t think I would have become a songwriter, honestly,” she said. “Music itself is a language. There is always something around the corner to discover and it’s amazing.”

Angelic Performance Deeply Moves Father

Music Clubhouse member, Erin, came to the Music Clubhouse Director to get help with a song she was planning to sing at church. The director, who knew Erin well from being her voice and piano teacher, asked Erin to play and sing the song. Despite being shy, Erin sang the song beautifully. The director then showed her the right-hand chords and a simple accompanying pattern for her left hand.

Erin was encouraged to practice, and she immediately did. That same afternoon, she was ready to try the song again.

“After she played the song straight through once, I encouraged her to sing the song as though she was ‘gifting it’ to her congregation, to just enjoy the words and her music,” says the Music Clubhouse director.

Erin began to play the song a second time, and the music director invited other musicians- a bass player and a drummer - in to play backup for her.



Erin

Voice & Piano

*Hearing his daughter sing brought
Erin's father to tears.
This personal moment touched
everyone in the room.*

As the three of them were playing the song, Erin's father happened to come in the room and began to watch her play and sing accompanied by the two boys.

“He was so proud of her that he started crying,” the Music Clubhouse director said. “He gave his daughter a big kiss, gave me a hug and shook the boys’ hands. It was awesome. What a great day!”

One of the other musicians, Geoff, who had played with Erin that day also felt the impact of this experience.

“As we played, the girl's father entered the room and saw an angel play,” said Geoff. “He saw how beautifully his own daughter performed, and he started to cry and love her with great compassion.”

Geoff added, *“When the song ended and he left with her, I felt happy and emotional inside as if I made my own father proud. It was an unforgettable experience.”*

Music-Making Leads to Good Decision-Making

The teen years can be particularly challenging, and some teens struggle to make the right choices. That was certainly the case for Keely, a 15-year-old member of the Music Clubhouse.

Then Keely joined the Future Music Group, a new intensive program at the Music Clubhouse focused on developing production skills; music business knowledge; and songwriting. *Keely, who now wants to pursue a career in music, “realized that the Future Music Group presented her with opportunities she didn’t have elsewhere,” says the Music Clubhouse Director.*

And Keely took full advantage of the opportunities afforded by this program! With the support from staff, Keely started to perform. Additionally, she began working on songwriting. In fact, she co-wrote the first song for Future Music Group.



Keely Songwriting

Discovering her passion for songwriting was what it took to keep Keely on the right track.

Now she wants to pursue a career in music.

Since that first song, she’s been involved in many impressive projects with the Future Music Group, such helping produce a music video for their song, “The Future,” in collaboration with the Music Clubhouse’s Video Production Program.

According to the Music Clubhouse Director, Keely is now “back on track” and making good decisions.

This is in no small part due to Keely’s involvement in this specialized music programming. *“Music helps me express who I am,” says Keely. “It is like the air I breathe, which motivates me. I feel like I’m in another world full of positivity in the Music Clubhouse.”*

That positivity is not lost on those around her. The Music Clubhouse Director believes, *“Music has been like a match for Keely. She already had a passion for music but never got the chance to shine. I have seen her confidence build and her positive decision-making transform her for the better. I am incredibly proud of her!”*

Quiet Rock Star with the Love of LOUD

Geena initially wanted to play the drums because they were really loud and looked like a lot of fun. After two years of taking drum lessons at the Music Clubhouse, she couldn't seem to get past drumming basics. Trying a different approach, her mentor asked which song she would like to learn to play. She immediately said, "Rock Star" by Nickelback.

Geena and her mentor learned the song together by talking about the song's structure, song form, fills, and beat. After much convincing and encouragement, Geena agreed to perform for the first time at an Open Mic Night at the Music Clubhouse, a safe, supportive event where students of any skill level can perform.

So with Geena on drums, and her mentor on guitar and vocals, they performed together in front of one of the Music Clubhouse's largest Open Mic Night audiences, including most of her extended family. *At the end of the performance, a thrilled Geena threw her fists in the air and let out a rock-star, "Yeah!"*



Geena Drums

Before agreeing to perform for the first time, Geena needed a lot of convincing and encouragement. She loved the audience's response so much, she hasn't stopped performing since.

She has continued to perform at Open Mic Nights ever since that evening.

Geena's performances inspired her to start her own band called "Infinity of Dry Ice," a name that combines ideas given by different family members.

"I think it is awesome being in Infinity of Dry Ice with my bandmates. We even have shirts!" says Geena. "When I play, I like to see the crowd go crazy and dance and sing. It feels really rewarding. When I first started playing drums, I thought I was just going to be this regular ten-year-old drummer. Now it's like, I'm a twelve-year-old in a band! I love playing drums. I hope I can keep playing all my life, maybe even go to Berklee College."

In addition to drums, Geena now raps, sings and dances hip-hop. And she performs all of these in front of crowds with no hesitation.

From “Rock Band” Musician to the Real Deal

Music can inspire and spawn creativity, and in the case of Jesse, it can also help build relationships.

Jesse was a shy youth who had trouble engaging with a group. When Jesse discovered that the video game Rock Band was being offered at the Music Clubhouse, he jumped at the opportunity to be involved. Through his participation, he became an energetic musician who loves to practice, socialize, and help his peers learn songs that he himself has mastered. He made a close friend at the Music Clubhouse who shares similar interests and abilities. Every day they can be found sharing guitar licks and jamming together.

Jesse ended up taking advantage of everything the Music Clubhouse has to offer; he enrolled in drums, guitar, and an ensemble class. Jesse also was featured in a video produced for Boston-based company, Harmonix, as a way of showing how their generous donation of Rock Band is being used to engage teens in the Music Clubhouse.



Jesse

Drums & Guitar

A video game was his entrée into the world of music. Now he's a talented drummer and guitar player who takes advantage of all the Music Clubhouse has to offer.

“Jesse is involved in all aspects of the Music Clubhouse culture,” says the Music Clubhouse Director. “He embodies all that we hope to accomplish.”

When Jesse played drums to the Green Day song, “When I Come Around,” it was clear he was no longer just a Rock Band musician – he was the real deal!



Mentor Stories

“Our staff is well-prepared not only musically, but also in translating their passion for music patiently and appropriately to students of many ages. Beyond their preparation and skill level, many of them form relationships with the participants and with the organization.”

Sociedad Latina Music Clubhouse Director



Reinventing the Youth Development Model

“Walk into the lobby of the Lawrence Branch of the Merrimack Valley YMCA in Lawrence, Massachusetts, any afternoon and you will see a flurry of activity,” says Vice President of Operations Frank Kenneally.

But it wasn’t always this way. For a while, the Lawrence YMCA struggled financially, and “there wasn’t a good sense that our mission was being delivered,” recalls Kenneally. Being the 23rd poorest community in the country, with 21% percent of its population living below the poverty level, Lawrence really needed a strong youth development organization. The YMCA could help combat high crime, unemployment rates, dropout rates, and low test scores in schools, but to do so, it needed to innovate its programs piece by piece to “meet the needs of an urban YMCA branch,” says Kenneally.

A significant part of this innovation began in 2004, when Frank first met with co-founders of Music & Youth Initiative, Gary & Joan Eichhorn. They had a mutual goal of establishing an after school arts program focusing on music.

With the support of the YMCA, Frank and the Eichhorns worked collaboratively to make the vision of the first Music Clubhouse a reality.



Frank

Chief Operating Officer
Merrimack Valley YMCA

Frank was seeking programming to attract youth beyond those who were interested in sports. Then he found Music & Youth.

“It was very important to me personally,” Frank remembers. “I wanted to provide a safe place for teens where they would feel connected, build a sense of community and that would help them along their journey.”

Frank noticed big changes right away. *“The YMCA went from being a very sports-oriented place to being able to attract kids who never would have come to the Y before. This was a new vehicle to do our youth development.”*

At the Music Clubhouse, the youth participants gained not only music instruction, but also *“positive adult role models, character development, positive self-esteem, and direction— opportunities that they wouldn’t have had otherwise,”* says Kenneally. *The Music Clubhouse helped “change the culture of the YMCA,” by meeting the needs of the community with this unique programming.*

“When I walk into the building everyday, I want to hear those drums and guitars. I love it! Hearing all that noise, I know that the building is alive and all this great stuff is happening.”

Volunteer Makes a Musical Connection

“Working with the kids at the Music Clubhouse is by far the best volunteering experience I’ve ever had. It has opened my eyes to how powerful writing and playing music can be to a young person. I’ve seen firsthand the self-confidence and self-esteem that music instills in people.

While I’ve been writing original songs for over five years, this is my first experience teaching music. I was nervous when I started because I’m a self-taught musician and I can’t read music. But I’ve learned that you don’t need to be a musical prodigy to make a great connection with someone. *Given the structure of the Music Clubhouse program and the ability to work with the same kids over time, I’ve made lasting connections – which I think is rare in a volunteer program.*

I work one-on-one with the kids, either learning songs together or helping them develop their own original work. For example, I’ve worked closely with a young man named Mario. He had experimented with writing songs, and I wanted to help him develop them. In just a couple of months he had several full songs written (including the accompanying instrumentation) and had recorded them in the studio! Working with him every week was a truly great experience.

Another student had been playing guitar for only two weeks. We worked together on a beginner melody. He was struggling



Steph

Clubhouse Volunteer (songwriting)

Steph, a self-taught musician who couldn’t read music, wondered if she was really qualified to teach songwriting. Teaching turned into one of the most rewarding experiences she’s ever had.

with the timing in one section. Rather than have him continue to do the section over and over and risk him getting bored (or worse – frustrated with the music), I decided to just keep going with the melody. It was better for him to make progress than to be technically perfect.

Volunteering in the Music Clubhouse has made me a better teacher, as I discovered how to tailor each learning experience to the individual student rather than repeating the same teaching method for everyone. It has given me confidence in my ability to contribute something valuable to others. I’ve learned how easy and rewarding it is to give a little time to something that can change a life.

My goal is to teach the students to see music as an extension of themselves and to use it as a form of expression; a way to work through difficult emotions; or to just be creative and experimental. If they do that, then I’ve accomplished my goal.”

Clubhouse Director Provides Consistency for Teens

Rick remembers when a fight broke out in 2006 at the Boys & Girls Club because too many kids were trying to fit into a tiny, closet-sized music room. That brawl threatened to close the music program entirely. But Rick (a volunteer at the time) and his colleagues recognized that the incident was indicative of something crucial– the teenagers passionately wanted and needed more music programming. In 2007, in partnership with Music & Youth Initiative, they expanded the program and built a Music Clubhouse instead of shutting down.

Fast forward to 2015, and Rick is still there– as a Music Clubhouse Director and as Team Leader for all five of the Music Clubhouses of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Boston– continually providing participants with the experience of music, and much more.

“We offer a sense of community and a consistency that is often not found in their home and school lives. Sometimes it’s not even about the music– we’re there for them every day, whether it’s a good day or a bad day.”

Rick can rattle off names and stories of current members and alumni as if they were his own family. He says that watching them grow has been the most rewarding experience. He loves seeing new participants who look up to older members eventually become the role models to the next batch of incoming participants.



Rick

Music Clubhouse Director

Rick’s dedication has offered him a unique insight into the youth who participate in the Music Clubhouse program. He understands that they need music... and much more.

Through years of experience with this ever-evolving mix of youth, Rick can now skillfully assess and address the needs of any type participant– from the teen who needs a safe space or a support system to a serious musician; from the occasional participant to a “super-elite member” who spends 5 hours every single day in the Music Clubhouse. All of these members have a place at the Music Clubhouse.

“We’re not forcing anyone to fit a mold,” says Rick. “Everyone understands that music is a super-inclusive art.”

It is clear that Rick’s dedication is unwavering, and he admits he continues to be proud and humbled by the teens’ triumphs, both large and small.

“At the root of it, they’ve got a place that they can try music. And if they realize it’s not for them, that’s as much a success as for the other kids, because at least they had the opportunity.”



Thank you for bringing music to youth!

2005: "When you start playing, it's like *you go to a different world* and you never want to come back." – Greg (age 11)

2006: "Since they've taken music out of schools, kids are yearning for a place to be where they can express themselves and their emotions. I think the Music Clubhouse has definitely been *the best thing that has ever happened to me.*" – Charlotte (age 18)

2007: "The reason I come to the Music Clubhouse is because *it's a place I can escape*, where I can take music lessons and make friends!" – Exodus (age 14)

2008: "Music- it's something you can feel, taste, see, hear, love, and experience. *It's like magic!* I got to feel that magic- the music stage experience- for the first time, and it felt so amazing!" – Gabriel (age 14)

2009: "Last night was my first time performing in front of people. Playing guitar *felt like scoring a million baskets* in basketball!" – Jacob (age 11)



2010: "Working with the Clubhouse staff *teaches me life lessons*, such as building character– the way you carry yourself and present yourself to people. How you always have to be humble about everything." – Javier (age 14)

2011: "It gives us a *creative way to discover ourselves*, and to rock out!" – Charlie (age 16)

2012: "It has *helped me prepare for the future*, especially for college, because now I can express myself more." – Leon (age 18)

2013: "I have tried to *be a positive role model* in the Music Clubhouse so that the younger members have someone to look up to. I encourage members to get out of their comfort zone and to try new things." – Sandy (age 16)

2014: "Playing music is not something that I'm forced to do. I want to do it, and I really love it! *Music is inspiring* in my life!" – Thaddeus (age 10)

2015: "Through this program I have a tremendous *boost of confidence...* And my leadership qualities and new-found skills have helped shape me into a *proud figure in my community.*" – Anton (age 18)

