

Life, death and everything in between

by Tika Levitzky
Staff Reporter

Across from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, set away from the street, sits a warm ranch-style building surrounded by manicured lawns. Passers-by do not acknowledge its existence and the miniscule sign that reveals its name blends in with the concept. The short-term residents have every comfort of home,

They know before entering this haven their life will end here...

even the warmth of the family pets. However, these residents will live in this secluded sanctuary for only six months, then death will summon them.

Age, gender, sexual preference, and economic status are not prerequisites to enter this place. The one common denominator present in all the residents is—accepting death. The residents, their families, and the medical staff talk with each other, mourn with each other, and support each other. Sometimes, stories like "Freddy the Flea" help a youngster understand that her daddy is going on a trip far away where he will not hurt anymore. Some-

times, elderly wives feed, change, and rock their dying husbands to sleep until their last breath. And sometimes, a mother will sit and talk her own child through death. Emotions of family and residents race like wildfire through the corridors at any given moment.

The residents live in what is called a "quad area" in groups of four. Each has his own room decorated with memorabilia from home: a wedding picture; an old, tattered stuffed bear, or maybe a copy of "Tom Sawyer." In the center of the quad area, four residents and their families share a kitchen and a living room. The cozy living room is continually used for family discussion, Monday Night Football and birthday celebrations. And the aroma that lingers from the kitchen is always a surprise; the families and the residents can prepare any kind of meal they wish.

Protruding tubes, blinking lights, and intimidating respirators do not exist in the residents rooms. Only medicines that relieve pain and anxiety are given. They know before entering this

haven their life will end here and that no resuscitation will be administered to prolong their life and their suffering.

The nursing staff and other faculty do not dress in the standard white clinical uniforms. Actually, they wear whatever is comfortable and easy to move around in. This place has a "laid-back" atmosphere. Nurses are not

running into each other, family members are not screaming for assistance, and doctors are not ordering people around. Nurses sit with residents, drink a cup of coffee or two and discuss the day's events. At times, debates on certain issues heat up an entire quad. Moreover, doctors relax as they spend time with the residents. Everything seems to be in slow-

motion. This place represents life, death, and everything in between. Most people do not know that such a place exists. The residents are not called patients and this place is formally called the Nathan Adelson Hospice. The last six months for the residents are spent reminiscing, discussing, and accepting death.

Music therapy found to be a benefit in dealing with stress

by Shawn Black Snider
Staff Reporter

Do violins, pianos, horns and drums sound like the tools of a psychotherapist or those of a musician? For Linda Kelly, they are both.

Kelly, who is not only a pianist but a Registered Music Therapist (RMT), is among a growing number of professionals who are in the relatively new field known as creative arts therapy.

Creative arts therapy uses the many different areas of art, such as music, dance and drama. In conjunction with a trained therapist, it uses art's unique elements as aids in helping individuals deal with such things as anxiety, depression and phobias.

Kelly, who is one of only three RMTs in Las Vegas, explained, "As a music therapist, you use the language, rhetoric and style that is unique to music and its expression, toward the process of helping someone deal with their particular concern. You use music but your reach is

a non-musical goal."

With music therapy, as with many kinds of therapy, a three-pronged approach is used. These are assessment, treatment and evaluation, Kelly said. With music therapy, however, skills such as composing, performing, improvising, notating and listening are also used.

By attaching emotion to a piece of created music, one has a basis for dealing with that emotion.

The therapy doesn't require any musical ability or experience, she said, but by attaching emotion to a piece of created music, one has a basis for dealing with that emotion.

"In developing your own sequence of notes or melodies, you are representing your own life. You access your own subconscious," she said.

Music therapy, as a formal science, was founded in 1951, but

its first documented use is traced to ancient Greece, where the importance of a balance between music and gymnastics, the creative and the physical, was stressed.

Its extensive use during World War II in army hospitals has since brought it into the very conservative ranks of the medical and dental fields, Kelly explained.

"Its continued research and growth is why it is now used in hospitals, private practice, schools, developmental centers and even burn units," she said.

The curriculum set by the National Association of Music Therapy encompasses, among other things, the sciences, psychology, sociology and of course music. Kelly said, "You must be proficient in all instruments but excel in one."

At present Kelly is working at the Child Guidance and Family Treatment Center and is also involved in many music therapy seminars.



Yell Photo / Marc Baruch

Light up a life with remembrance

by Tika Levitzky
Staff Reporter

During the holiday season, the Nathan Adelson Hospice will be having a program called "Light Up a Life," at the Boulevard Mall. The festivities begin Nov. 17, 1990 with an opening ceremony and will continue through Christmas. The program is set up for people to give donations to the Hospice in memory of a loved one. When a donation is given, a candle is lit

on the Christmas tree in remembrance.

Susan Travouski, program director at the Nathan Adelson Hospice said, "This program is for public awareness. Many Las Vegans do not know that the Hospice exists and that it is a non-profit organization." The "Light up a Life" program is manned by volunteers and staff of the Hospice. Donations of any denomination will be accepted.

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