

Arts council makes events more accessible to patients

Whether your preference is jazz, blues, classical, folk, gospel or bluegrass, going out to a concert is always a good bet to pick up an otherwise not-so-great week, or help make a good one even better.

But if you happen to be hospitalized, going out is probably not on the week's itinerary. That's why the Durham Arts Council has a program which, in that situation, can bring the concert — or drama or dance performance — in to you.

The program is called *access*, which stands for "Arts Council's Creative Experiences in Special Settings." The name was changed July 1 from Hospital Audiences.

Local talent

It has been designed to mobilize and channel the cultural resources of the community to benefit institutionalized and disadvantaged citizens, according to Danielle Withrow, associate director of the arts council.

Drawing from a large pool of local talent, *access* arranges for cultural events to be presented in hospitals, correctional facilities, rehabilitation centers, nursing homes and senior centers. Arrangements also are made for institutionalized

persons, including ambulatory patients, to attend events in the community through donated tickets.

10,000 in audience

Since the program was begun in December 1975, more than 10,000 people have attended some 115 performances. About 30 of the major performances have taken place at Duke.

"Currently, we are scheduling four to six major performances a year at Duke," Withrow said. Also, about once a month, a smaller program is given on one of the wards.

Other institutions served by *access* include the VA, Cerebral Palsy and Durham County General hospitals and the Durham Rehabilitation Center.

Announced in newsletter

Withrow said that performances available during each six-week period are announced in advance in the *access* newsletter and booked on a first come-first served basis.

She said the council had no trouble filling the performance schedule, "though if there are other areas of the hospital we could be serving, we want to know."

One aspect of the program which is

being under utilized, Withrow noted, is the provision of free tickets to community events.

"We frequently have more tickets available than are used," she said and added that the tickets provided include ones for staff members accompanying patients, "though the service is mainly for patients."

Anyone wanting to know more about making cultural events more accessible to the patients with whom he or she works, can contact the Durham Arts Council, 810 W. Proctor St., phone 682-5519.



CLICKIN' THEIR HEELS—The Click 'N' Cloggers dance team provided the most recent of more than 30 performances for Duke Hospital patients sponsored by *access* (formerly Hospital Audiences, Inc.)

The little things can make a big difference

You've seen me a hundred times...with many faces...many forms...many reasons for being in your care.

I am the frightened, middle-aged woman waiting at your admitting desk, nervously opening and closing my purse.

I am the impersonal, sheet-covered form you see through the partly opened door as you patrol your hallway.

I am the shuffling, stoop-shouldered figure in faded flannel you encounter at every corner as you go about your daily work.

I am the starry-eyed woman who has become a mother for the first time, longing to hold the miracle I have produced.

Everything is new and strange to me. Yesterday I was in familiar surroundings and was happy planning my tomorrows. Today I am in an alien world, trying hard to adjust. The little familiar things of my own world seem to take on great importance. I may complain to you. I may rebel against the strangeness. You see, I don't want to be in the hospital. I want to go home.

From the moment I walk up to your admitting desk, I am a mass of fears, I am fearful of the unknown. I am alarmed over the prospect of pain, disfigurement...even death. I fear financial distress or catastrophe. More than anything else, I am lonely.

If I tell you my coffee is cold, it may be because coffee is more than a breakfast drink to me. It has a deep symbolic meaning. Through years of experience, I have come to associate it with congeniality, friendship, the warmth and security of home. And just as hot coffee symbolizes these good things to me, cold coffee reminds me that I am

among strangers, antiseptic and somehow frightening strangers.

When I object to early morning awakening, I often mean that I am insecure.

When I report that my nurse is indifferent, I often mean I feel forsaken.

Please understand that often in my complaints about little things, I am trying to tell you of far deeper needs.

Will I lose my identity? Will I be exposed to all sorts of indignities? I'm afraid that I'll be treated, not as a housewife...father...plumber...farmer...banker...but as a fascinating gall bladder...an interesting thyroid...a stubborn kidney.



I am suddenly hypersensitive.

In spite of your modern equipment, your electric call boards, your mahogany inlaid admitting counters, I can be devastated by a blunt word from the admitting clerk.

Admitting procedures may be routine, but I've never been exposed to them before. In three minutes, the admitting clerk can wipe me out as an intelligent person, strip me of privacy, turn me into an impersonalized case history, build an animosity from which I will never recover.

It may be that my sensitivity is exaggerated. But when I show the admitting clerk my hospital insurance identification card, make me feel welcome. Let me know you're glad I've come to your hospital. Tell me by your attitude that you respect me as an individual.

You may tell me that what I expect is impossible, that some "discomforts," some "fears" are part of any hospital stay. I will tell you that I understand this perfectly when I am not a patient, but from the minute I enter your hospital as a patient, my outlook changes. Minor things take on abnormal importance.



Much of my fright as a fledgling patient comes from lack of understanding on my part. All too often you take for granted that I know these things and I'm left to grope for my answers alone.

How can you help me through this twilight period? Warn me about such things as the postoperative depression that is so likely to torment me. Assure me that this is normal and temporary.

Help me bridge my initial feelings of embarrassment. Assure me that the bedpan is only temporary and that as I improve I'll be able to look after myself to a greater degree.

Assure me that I am never alone or abandoned, even on the busiest hospital day. Reassure me that my struggle is not a private one...that my feelings, frustrations, resentments and emotions are simply a part of being a patient.

I appear normal, but I have left normalcy outside your door. Though I am mature, I have suddenly become a child, frightened of the long, dark nights.

And...oh, how I want you to be warm and friendly! I want you to know that I bring with me a personality, not just another problem in surgery or internal medicine. I want you to know I am much more than a name typed on the band welded around my wrist.

Never forget, you've been a symbol to people like me ever since the Samaritan traveled the road between Jerusalem and Jericho two thousand years ago.

The equipment and the methods have changed. But the concept continues unchanged. You're the benevolent healer. You cannot...you dare not...change!

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