

LOCAL

VOLUNTEERING

COMMUNITY STAR | MEET SOMEONE MAKING A DIFFERENCE

In tune with kids who need smiles

STAR STATS

The star: Dr. Gustavo Tolosa
The community: Dallas
The organization: Musical Angels

Smiles may be hard to come by for hospitalized children. But when Dr. Gustavo Tolosa shows up with his keyboard, ready to teach a music lesson, it can make a child's day a little less painful.

Bringing that joy to sick children is what drove the Argentina-born pianist and music teacher to recently launch Musical Angels, a nonprofit organization that shows kids how to make music and express themselves.

"Reaching children that are hard to reach or don't have the opportunity and bringing it to them is something I feel very strongly about," says Tolosa, who received his doctorate in music and piano from the Eastman School of Music at the University of Rochester. And after driving by Children's Medical Center Dallas every day on his way to work, he had an idea. "I thought, 'There are kids there who could be making music. They could be expressing themselves and have something positive to do.'"

He contacted the hospital and has been teaching individual piano lessons there since March. And next month he will begin teaching group classes at Our Children's House at Baylor. His dream is to expand the organization to children's hospitals around the country.

And the lessons are real. There's no "Old MacDonald" here — more like Beethoven's "Ode to Joy." "I don't treat them differently," he says. "I give them a lesson just like I do my other students."

He plans the lessons so that the children make progress each week, and he sometimes lets them keep the keyboard between lessons so that they can practice. "They are so excited to show me what they've been working on," he says. "I feel I'm bringing them a bit of



DR. GUSTAVO TOLOSA, founder of Musical Angels, gives a lesson to Chimaobi Santa at Children's Medical Center Dallas.

everyday life that some other child has ... so that they can truly forget that they are in the hospital."

But the lessons don't only benefit the children. "The parents are sometimes just as excited as the kids about the lessons," Tolosa says. "It's a tremendous reward. For the parents, the child and for me."

"All this time, I was always thinking about the benefit to the children," he says. "But it never occurred to me how much benefit I would get. I have learned to really appreciate life and to appreciate health. I leave here with a whole different perspective on life. The problems that you think are big are nothing."

Sometimes a child is fortunate enough to leave the hospital, but others do not recover. "I call them my Musical Angels," he says. He makes recordings of the children's music lessons for parents to keep, to provide them with something positive that happened during their experience at the hospital.

Upcoming events

■ **Families Making Music:** Hear Tolosa perform a concert with his mother and two daughters. 2 p.m. Friday, Lobby, Children's Medical Center Dallas, 1935 Medical District Drive. Free.

■ **Cupcake Gala Fundraiser:** Enjoy free cupcakes from the Cupcake Queen and enter to win prizes. 2 to 5 p.m. Saturday. Musical Angels, Southside on Lamar, 1409 S. Lamar St., Suite 101.

WANT TO HELP?

Musical Angels is looking for volunteers to teach music or assist in group music classes. For more information, call 214-810-8020 or visit www.musicalangels.net.

For children who recover, it can inspire them to continue their studies. But for those who don't, it's a wonderful memory for parents. Something that can help bring the smiles back.

Erin Booke

LEND A HAND

1 Meals on Wheels: The Collin County Committee on Aging combats isolation and promotes the health, dignity and independence of those 60 and older with meals, education for caregivers and a transit system for all citizens. Volunteers are needed to deliver meals to homebound clients two to four hours per month. Volunteers must have valid driver's license and current auto insurance. Minimum age to volunteer: 18. **Time:** Ongoing, weekdays from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Volunteers needed: Varies
Location: Collin County
Contact: Lara Kitchens, 972-562-6996, KitchensL@mowcc.com; www.ccoaweb.org

2 Texas Girls State Fair: The Women's Museum, which brings to life the voices, talents, achievements and stories of women of the past, present and future, seeks volunteers to provide hospitality to visitors and monitor exhibit areas for compliance with museum guidelines for more than 50,000 guests and visitors during the State Fair of Texas. Minimum age to volunteer: 20. **Time:** 10 a.m.-7 p.m. Sept. 24
Volunteers needed: 300
Location: Dallas (75226)
Contact: Norita Jackson, 214-915-0874, norita.jackson@thewomensmuseum.org; www.thewomensmuseum.org

3 School enrollment assistance: Refugee Services of Texas restores hope and provides a path to a successful, new life for their refugee clients. Volunteers are needed to assist newly arrived refugee children to enroll in school by guiding them through testing, shots, first day of school, etc. Minimum age to volunteer: 18. **Time:** Ongoing
Volunteers needed: 2-3
Location: Dallas (75231)



The Volunteer Center of North Texas receives thousands of volunteer opportunities from more than 1,400 area nonprofit groups. For more information, visit www.vcnet.org.

Contact: Suzanne Senesac-Sherif, 214-821-4422, dallasoutreach.rst@sbcglobal.net; www.refugeeservicesof-texas.org

4 Student volunteers needed: The City of Dallas, which serves the needs of the Dallas community by enhancing the vitality and quality of life for all, is seeking student volunteers to fold letters, stuff envelopes and stamp letters. Minimum age to volunteer: 17. **Time:** Ongoing, summer and fall

Volunteers needed: 15
Location: Dallas (75201)
Contact: Marisol Patton, 214-670-4999, hbranham@vcnet.org; www.dallascityhall.com

5 Mediation: Dispute Resolution Services, which serves the community by providing, promoting and teaching dispute and conflict resolution, seeks volunteers to interpret for mediators during mediation with Spanish-speaking parties. Minimum age to volunteer: 21. **Time:** Ongoing

Volunteers needed: unlimited
Location: Fort Worth (76117)
Contact: Abby Mitchell, 817-614-2885, j@drsnorthtexas.org; www.drsnorthtexas.org

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