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Share Your Blessings
C/O Ms. Sherry McKinley
Director of Programs & Services

The purpose of this letter is to give Share Your Blessings an enthusiastic “Thank You!” and to go into detail about how much your organization’s multiple donations of the Beamz Music System will benefit so many Southern California students, and their families in 2021.

I’m an itinerant teacher for the Orthopedic Impairment Program and an Assistive Technology Specialist. I work for the East County SELPA which is a collaboration of 10 school districts in Southern California, and I have a 100+ students on my caseload at any given time who are either on an IEP or a 504 plan. They range in age from 2 years up to 15 years. They attend school in a variety of settings including Home Hospital placements (for medically fragile children) to a general education classroom at a neighborhood school. My job is unique in that I stay with my students from preschool through the 8th grade. I get to know each of my students and their families very well, as well as the multitude of professionals who work together to make sure each student achieves their highest potential!

I’m going to highlight a couple of my students below - who have recently received a Beamz Music System, donated by Share Your Blessings.

Isaac is a 5th grade student, and he was born with a very rare genetic disease which requires him to have one-on-one nursing support, 24 hours a day, in a home hospital setting. Isaac’s mom and dad are in constant pursuit of new technology or equipment that will bring happiness and joy into Isaac’s day. One of Isaac’s favorite activities is to listen to songs on his iPad, and his level of alertness and engagement increase noticeably when music is added into any daily activity. You can understand why Isaac’s mom was so excited when she saw the Beamz Music System on a social media page. Her quest to find a device that could help her son access music, with a level of independence, led her to the Beamz. This resulted in her contacting me, and eventually, I came across the Share Your Blessings website.

My next student is named Bridget. She is in kindergarten, and she loves school, the color purple, and camping with her family. When her neighborhood school reopens, she will attend a general education classroom with full-time, nursing support. Bridget was born with a spinal cord injury, and she is dependent upon the adults in her life for all her self-care needs (at this time). She is very weak, and has minimal movements in her extremities which makes accessing toys, crayons, utensils very difficult for her. The Beamz Music System has been such an

amazing interactive tool for Bridget. It has given her the ability to connect with and create music, independently, by just lifting her finger. She could very well be the next Mozart. Bridget and her whole family have enjoyed using the Beamz Music System and having this device has been a blessing for them.

In addition to the students that I have referred to Share Your Blessings, I have forwarded the Share Your Blessings website, and application on to multiple Special Education Teachers, Speech and Language Therapists, Occupational Therapists, and Music Therapists so that many students, in many school settings can apply to have access to the Beamz Music System. This system can help therapists work with students on acquiring skill proficiency in a multitude of areas, while incorporating music and joy into each activity.

Speech and Language Therapists, can use the Beamz Music System to work on "Cause and Effect" skills with non-verbal or unintelligible students. Why is this important? In order for students to learn to use a voice output, communication device (such as a switch or app that speaks for them) they first have to have a concrete understanding of "Cause and Effect." For example, If I (the student), reach out and "Cause" a disruption on a device (the laser on the Beamz) it "Effects" the app on the iPad and I get to hear a song or play music. This might sound pretty simple, but if you add cognitive challenges, as well as moderate to severe mobility challenges into the Speech and Language challenges that many of our students have, there are very few devices that we can use successfully and consistently to teach "Cause and Effect!" The Beamz can be activated with the slightest movement of a finger, a knee, a head turn, a foot movement, etc. It basically levels the playing field for many of our most challenged students and opens up a whole new world of accessibility for them in the area of cause and effect interaction.

Music Therapists consult with specialists, across all academic areas, to help students make progress in functional skill areas (e.g. learning routines like what steps do I follow to wash my hands), or academic settings (e.g. what song(s) can I sing or memorize to help me stay calm when the noise and visual distractions in my environment become hard for me to handle). Music Therapists also work a lot with Speech and Language Therapists to help increase students' motivation to communicate or participate in communication activities. The Beamz Music System, along with the downloadable songs for the iPad or PC, opens up a world of opportunities by providing the itinerant Music Therapist with a truck load of musical instruments and activities, in a portable and easy to use device. I shared your organization's website and application with the music therapist that works directly with my student, Isaac. I have a feeling you are going to hear from several of her colleagues in the near future.

Occupational Therapists are often looking at ways to help students increase their ability to "Cross the Midline." In education this is important because students who haven't acquired the motor skill of crossing the midline (using their left hand to reach for something on the right side of their body, using their pencil to trace a horizontal line that goes from left to right) often have scattered attention, decreased fine motor skills (difficulty with handwriting, typing, cutting out shapes), and have poor directional skills (such as up, down, left and right) to interpret symbols

(such as letters or numbers). Crossing midline is a basic skill needed as a building block for developing higher level fine motor skills. The Beamz Music system encourages students to Cross Midline in a fun and motivating way that provides them with immediate feedback. Students can interact with the device by reaching out, and engaging with the laser in order to activate the music on the iPad App. OT's can use the Beamz in one-to-one or small group therapy sessions, within the school setting. It's portable and easy to transport and it can be used with children across all age groups.

Educational Specialists are always looking for ways to teach children by using a multi-modal means of instruction. Each student has a learning strength (e.g. they are auditory learners, visual learners, or kinesthetic learners (students who learn best when they are actively doing something)). The Beamz Music System is a multi-modal teaching tool, meaning it engages all learners across all learning modalities, at the same time. This is why our special needs students are going to benefit from having access to this Music System in their classrooms. Perhaps the most important thing about the Beamz Music System is that it is super fun and rewarding to use. Kids and teachers alike are going to enjoy using it and creating musical experiences and memories together.

Lastly, when I first came across Share Your Blessings website, I was a bit skeptical of actually getting a donated device to use with my students. So many businesses and organizations seem to be on hold during this pandemic, so I was extremely excited when Sherry called me back to tell me she was shipping out a device to me the next day. I was even more excited when she told me that Share Your Blessings goal was to get the Beamz Music System out to as many children as possible. She shared that she would love for individual teachers and therapists to apply for a device so that they could use the Beamz within their classrooms.. This was something I could help with, and I think Sherry would agree that Southern California is the hot spot for the Beamz Music System at this moment.

Thank you to Share Your Blessings for being so genuine, and generous. I'm grateful that I was able to find you on the internet, and I will continue to share your organization with as many professionals and families as possible.

Sincerely,

Helen Devane