

# STONY BROOK SERVES

A COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT  
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## Healing Harmonies: Music & Medicine

Olivia Basileo

The campus group Music & Medicine is harnessing the power of music to brighten the days of sick and elderly patients and help reenergize their spirits.

**“Through music, we are able to build a relationship with our audience that connects us momentarily.”**

Music & Medicine is a student group that performs at hospitals, rehab centers, nursing homes, and child care centers to bring music to people who otherwise couldn't go to a concert. Their mission is to increase awareness of music as a form of therapy and to inspire musicians in the community to make a difference with their skills.

Music & Medicine (M&M) just started up in Fall 2014 and currently has 12 musicians: vocalists, guitarists, violinists, a saxo-

phonist, a drummer, a flutist, a cellist, and a harmonist. They are divided into three groups: one that performs for children and veterans, one that performs larger concerts at Stony Brook Hospital and SB Cancer Center, and a last that gives weekly bedside performances for patients throughout SB Hospital. Many members play in more than one group. Members play different kinds of music depending on their audience; for children, they play Disney songs like “Let it Go,” while for veterans, they play classics and patriotic songs like “God Bless America.” M&M truly personalizes each performance they give to make sure patients will enjoy it to the fullest. They have also played at campus events supporting medical outreach, such as “Vigil of Hope” for suicide awareness and “Bodacious Bras” to help cancer patients.

Yi Gao, President and Founder of M&M, describes her favorite part of being in the club as working together with talented musicians all using their passion to make a

positive impact on the community. She says, “Through music, we are able to build a relationship with our audience that connects us momentarily. Often, we are able to bring great joy and hope to our audiences.” Children laugh, sing along, and dance to their music; and veterans cheer and sing, sometimes even asking for an encore. Even patients with Alzheimer's actively enjoy their performances; says Yi, “As our advisor Kate Valerio had

### Inside This Issue

Healing Harmonies:  
Music & Medicine 1

National Society  
of Collegiate  
Scholars 3

Students Helping  
Honduras 6



*M&M performance at the SB Hospital Lobby.*

told us after our performance, patients with Alzheimer’s may forget how to dress and eat, but they’ll never forget music.”

Many of the club’s most meaningful experiences come from their weekly bedside performances. They get to know the families and return to play for them week after week. Knowing that the patients look forward to their visits is extremely rewarding and motivational. Whether it’s their music, their determination, or the time and care they give each patient, M&M has done wonders for their audiences. M&M’s musical therapy initiative is proving that a little love and happiness can be a powerful force against illness. Yi says, “Through the simple power of music, we are able to use

our passion for music to contribute to the betterment of our community and bring hope to patients, their family, as well as any people who are struggling in life.”

Tony Yu, Secretary of M&M and a Saxophonist, says his most memorable experience was when he played at the bedside of a man in the post-surgical unit who had had brain surgery and was in a coma. Tony says, “after I played some of his favorite songs: “Fly me to the Moon” and “What a Wonderful World”, the patient opened his eyes and shined. His mother told us that it was his first time opening his eyes after the surgery.” For M&M, this was proof that their concept of therapeutic music was working. Tony’s music was so powerful that it woke a man from his coma and brought him back to his family. “I believe that music is the language of soul that can improve the well-being of the listener,” Tony says. He continues to play for this family every week.

Ivy Lee, Vice President of M&M and a vocalist and pianist, says, “Being a part of this club has taught me many things, but most importantly, it taught me that I can make a difference in someone’s life by doing the thing I love the most. Our music transcends words and reaches the hearts of those truly listening - and I think that’s simply amazing.” Ivy describes her most memorable moment as when she sang “Lucky” by Jason Marz to a couple at the hospital. As she sang, the wife held her sick husband’s hand tighter and tighter and couldn’t take her eyes off him. Ivy recalls, “When we finished singing, the wife seemed to be holding back her tears and quietly replied ‘thank you.’ I can never forget the fragile look on her face when she said those words.” M&M’s music has helped convey emotions that could not be spoken and bring patients and their families closer together in their times of crisis.

Misun Lee, a vocalist and the Group Leader of the Child Care and Veterans Home Performance division, says her favorite part of being in M&M is practicing with her fellow members with the hopes that their audiences will enjoy the performance as much as they do. She also enjoys the sense of community and respectful feedback shared between members. Her most memorable moment was singing “Do You Want to Build a Snowman” at the Child Care Center while the children giggled, danced, and sang along. She says, “Evoking conversation and laughter from the endearingly joyful preschoolers made my heart dance



SBU Hospital Music Interlude Performance.

too!”

M&M’s members dedicate their time and skills to making the hospital stays of patients a little bit brighter. Aside from performing weekly and playing at larger events, members practice three to four times a week to ensure they are always ready to give the best performances possible. Music & Medicine’s community service is extremely personalized: it’s built off the skills of the members and tailored to the recipients’ needs. Yi says, “Through conducting various live concerts and regular beside

performances, we are able to brighten the days of many of our audience members and bring positive changes throughout the University community.” The club has truly mastered music as a form of therapy and continues to share it with patients of all ages and illnesses.

*Students who wish to get involved in M&M’s mission can look for news at the beginning of the fall 2015 semester, when M&M will be recruiting new undergraduate members. Check out their Facebook page here: [www.facebook.com/musicnmedicine](http://www.facebook.com/musicnmedicine)*

## National Society of Collegiate Scholars

Julianne Broderick

SBU’s National Society of Collegiate Scholars (NSCS) is an honor society that recognizes freshmen and sophomore students for their high academic achievements. NSCS is comprised of over 900 members—300 of which just joined the organization in March

2015.

The group's active members support various different charities, which sometimes include their own personal causes. Nujbat Meraji, President of NSCS Chapter at SBU, spoke to the society's charitable works: "currently we are running a 'First in the Family' Fundraiser to raise money for students who are the first in their family to be going off to college and who are struggling to pay for it."

NSCS also hosted a breast cancer related fundraiser called "Scare Away Breast Cancer" during October, which is Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Meraji says, "It was the first time we organized a candy gram to collect

**It's really nice to invite the campus community to join us to support charities, while celebrating with great food and pie!"**

donations towards breast cancer research. Breast cancer is something that is close to my heart since my grandmother is a survivor ... using NSCS as a platform to spread awareness and collect research funding gave me a great feeling of accomplishment." Students also had great things to say about the event, says Meraji: "[they] loved the idea since we incorporated [a] Halloween theme into it as we delivered candies and anonymous letters to [students'] friends."

Meraji says that the charities



*NSCS members presenting to students at March for College.*

they support correlate with NSCS's current events. Sonali Bahl, the society's Star Status Coordinator and Secretary, says one of NSCS's strategies to support their charities is to host their own events, "such as 'Autumn Ecstasy,' [and

we] invite other organizations to participate or collaborate." Autumn Ecstasy is a charity ball NSCS hosts in November that supports three different charities; one of these charities is focused towards the holiday season. Bahl

said of Autumn Ecstasy: “[it] has been memorable every year that I attended. It gets everyone into the holiday spirit, since its right before Thanksgiving. It’s really nice to invite the campus community to join us to support charities, while celebrating with great food and pie!”

Of all the events they’ve done this semester, Meraji says his favorite is “definitely March To College! This Saturday we got to witness the brilliant minds of about 40 middle school children. To see them full of dreams and hopes for the future was amazing. Each of them have high goals in life, whether it be [to be] a pediatrician or [to create] their own brand of clothing.” NSCS as well as other organizations such as Project Sunshine, SBU Ballroom, SB Athletic Marching Band, and SB Taandava worked with the children at the event. Bahl agreed

that the event was a great success: “It was satisfying to see that the children were excited to come to the university, especially since it was snowing unexpectedly ... we could see that we made a difference by showing the children many of the opportunities that they would have at the university level ... NSCS members changed their own lives by changing someone else’s.” NSCS’s connection with this event lies in their core principle of service to the community. Because some of NSCS members come from underprivileged communities, knowing they helped people going through the same issues was very satisfying for those members. Not only was the event a great success, but it was also memorable for everyone: participants actively took part in the dance workshop and really enjoyed themselves at the event. The Stony Brook Athletic Band’s performance and the

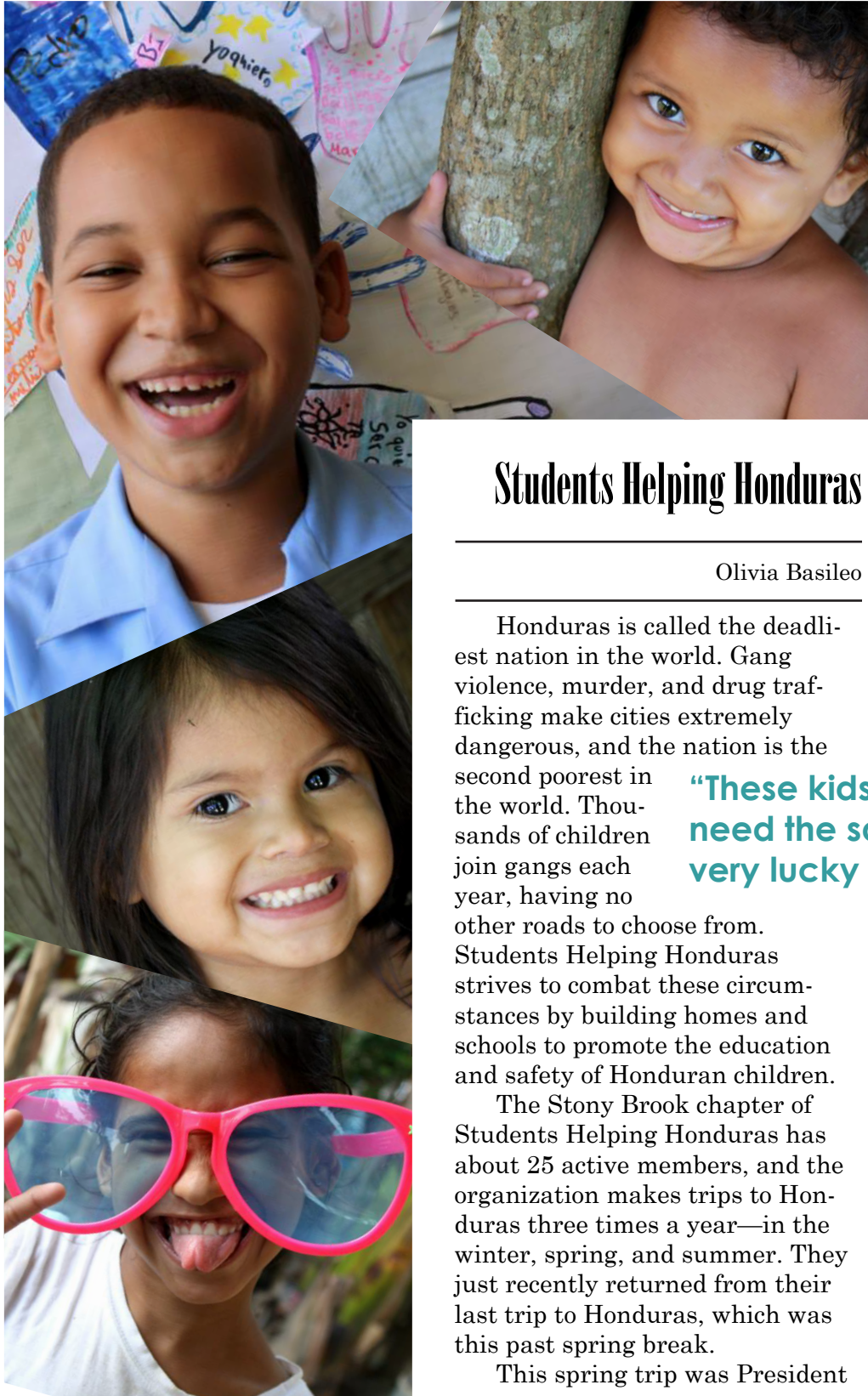
drum line from the band brought an incredible amount of energy to the event. Wolfie’s appearance at the event ended the day on a very high note.

NSCS’s March to College Day event made for some very big shoes to fill; NSCS has high hopes for their next event, Stand Up For Community. In light of the events at the University of Oklahoma—where students were expelled due to racist comments—and the Chapel Hill shooting, NSCS wants to honor the principles of tolerance and understanding. Meraji speaks on behalf of all NSCS members when he says, “we believe that [these principles] are essential to creat[ing] a diverse community such as the one in Stony Brook ... We hope to have all different organizations representing different cultures and races perform at the event and take the community pledge with us.”

Students looking to get involved with NSCS’s commendable efforts to weave community service into the university community have several resources to learn more from. NSCS holds general body meetings and events, which they notify their members about through email and social media (Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram). You heard it here first from Bahl: “all students are welcome to attend and become involved in our events. We are always looking for excited members and individuals to help us make our events a success!” These events exemplify NSCS’s mission, and they encourage students to become a part of that.

*Students with Wolfie.*





## Students Helping Honduras

Olivia Basileo

Honduras is called the deadliest nation in the world. Gang violence, murder, and drug trafficking make cities extremely dangerous, and the nation is the second poorest in the world. Thousands of children join gangs each year, having no other roads to choose from. Students Helping Honduras strives to combat these circumstances by building homes and schools to promote the education and safety of Honduran children.

The Stony Brook chapter of Students Helping Honduras has about 25 active members, and the organization makes trips to Honduras three times a year—in the winter, spring, and summer. They just recently returned from their last trip to Honduras, which was this past spring break.

This spring trip was President

Colette Eustace's eighth visit to Honduras with the organization. The students spent the week working on a construction project—a girls' transitional home for the children the organization has adopted from the state orphanage. Students Helping Honduras raises money to sustain homes for the children it adopts, and the children are cared for by house mothers and fathers. This transitional home will provide a refuge for older girls around ages 18-19 so they can take time to transition from life at the home to life as independent adults. Colette says, "The state-run orphanage is very similar to a prison and adopting these children has been a great success of Students Helping Honduras." It was hard work in the hot Honduran sun, but between old and new members they made tremendous progress in the proj-

**"These kids are brilliant; they just need the same resources we were all very lucky to have."**

ect! The SBU chapter of SHH has also helped work on classrooms at the Villa Soleada Bilingual School.

Colette's most memorable moment in her trips to Honduras has been seeing the children grow and transform. She describes one girl, Angie, as being especially important to her: "It has been a beautiful thing to see her thrive as she attends [school]... I love when I visit and she shows me her recent tests, with almost all perfect scores." Angie's growth and enthusiasm continues to impress Colette each time she visits. Since starting



*Honduran children at school.*

at the Villa Soleada Bilingual School, Angie has developed strong reading comprehension and can translate entire stories between English and Spanish. To Colette, Angie is a hero.

Colette's favorite part of Students Helping Honduras is its long-term view of development—something many other organizations are lacking. She says, “By educating and empowering the youth in Honduras, we believe that the children in the schools we build will be the next doctors, engineers,

and leaders of their nation. These kids are brilliant; they just need the same resources we were all very lucky to have.” SHH is about giving children in Honduras the support to succeed. The transitional home the volunteers are building will open up opportunities for the older kids who may have otherwise been placed on the street. Their time spent in the home will allow them to gather themselves and continue their education or find work. Just a few weeks or months in the home could mean the difference between a life

of poverty and a life of self-sufficiency. Moreover, the presence of Stony Brook students in the community—repeatedly visiting—provides a foundation of care for the children. Chapter members always spend time getting to know the children and the locals, cooking meals, playing soccer, and making connections.

SHH is much attuned to the issues surrounding “voluntourism,” and the organization handles it well: leaders engage student volunteers in “service learning” throughout the trip and see that



*Students Helping Honduras on their Spring 2015 trip.*

students who attended the trips continue to fundraise once back in the States. SHH's key philosophy is sustaining projects, not just building them. The organization is responsible for supporting the orphans it has adopted and placed in the home. By continually emphasizing the long-term effects of their projects and the importance of maintaining and building upon them year after year, SHH leaders keep their members active and dedicated to the cause.

In order to sponsor their trips and projects, SHH members fund-

raise all year round. In the fall, the organization focuses on funding the expenses for students to go on the trip, and in the spring, they focus all their efforts on raising money to complete and sustain their projects. Members run bake sales weekly and inform family members of their trips to ask for support. The SBU chapter is one of the most successful fundraising chapters in the nation!

To fundraise for their trip in June, SHH is hosting a number of events this semester. On May 4, they will be hosting a Thrift

SHHop in which they sell lightly used clothes and accessories for \$5 or less. They also spread awareness; from April 6 to April 9, SHH members participated in the \$2 Challenge, a challenge to live on \$2 a day to demonstrate what kind of conditions children in the Honduras face each day. During this week, the organization had shanty shacks set up in the SAC Plaza and spoke about their cause and how Stony Brook can help. Recently, the club surpassed \$15,000 in funds raised!

Colette says, "This organiza-





Honduran children at school.

tion has entirely changed my life. I've been extremely fortunate to become part of such a powerful group of individuals. We have become a movement, and I now have friends all throughout the United States." Being part of SHH has transformed her leadership skills and given her insight into what she wants to do after graduation. "My entire life revolves around this group, and around the kids, and I'm the happiest I've ever been."

SHH's next visit to Honduras

will be June 20 – 27 this summer. It will be Colette's last time leading a trip with the Stony Brook chapter of SHH, so it promises to be a very special experience. Although it may be bittersweet, she is excited to pass the torch to new leaders and watch the chapter continue to grow and develop. Students are invited to get involved by attending chapter meetings and fundraisers! Students Helping Honduras meets on Tuesdays at 7:00PM in Melville Library E-4320. You may contact them at [stonybrook@studentshelpinghonduras.org](mailto:stonybrook@studentshelpinghonduras.org).

### Share Your Stories

We want to share your stories with the Stony Brook University community! *SB Serves* is a Career Center publication dedicated to highlighting the community service activities that the students, faculty, and staff of Stony Brook University take part in! To find out more about how to be featured in an upcoming issue please email Megan Smedley, Internship Consultant at [Megan.Smedley@stonybrook.edu](mailto:Megan.Smedley@stonybrook.edu). Please include your name, phone number, and email address along with a brief description of your involvement experience. Upon submission a *SB Serves* writer can contact you for additional details.

Features can range from one page articles to smaller snapshots. Pictures help bring to life the experience for readers and are great additions to issues! If you have any upcoming events you would like to share with the community we can include these as well. Maybe you have not been involved yourself but know someone that is and you would like to nominate them for an upcoming feature, let us know! We are always looking for new individuals and groups to feature please share with us your thoughts and experiences!