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NEWS RELEASE

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COMMUNITY CHORDS TO CELEBRATE DISABILITY PRIDE MONTH WITH FOURTH ANNUAL MUSIC THERAPY SHOWCASE



Augusta, GA—In celebration of Disability Pride Month, Augusta Symphony's Community Chords will present its fourth annual Music Therapy Showcase on **Friday, July 24, 2026**, at the Miller Theater. The morning event recognizes the talents, contributions, and lived experiences of people with disabilities while celebrating inclusion, self-expression, and community through music.

With this year's theme, **"Better Together,"** the showcase features adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities who participate in Community Chords music therapy programs. Performers from Accent, Inc., Caregiver, GA, Tri-Development Center of Aiken County, and Upside of Downs (Augusta) will come together for an inspiring morning of music, movement, and celebration.

The showcase is created by the music therapy participants themselves, who work throughout the year alongside their peers and a board-certified music therapist to select music, develop performances, and prepare for the stage. What began as karaoke sessions and lyric discussions in virtual music therapy during the pandemic has grown into an annual celebration of creativity, confidence, and community.

"This showcase celebrates each music therapy participant's unique strengths while giving them the opportunity to share the joy of music with family, friends, caregivers, and the organizations that support them," said Veronica Andreassen-Barker, Board-Certified Music Therapist.

The performances represent the culmination of six months of work in weekly music therapy. Each participant works toward individualized therapeutic goals through music, such as improving communication, strengthening memory, increasing independence, building confidence, supporting peers, enhancing expressive movement, or developing strategies to manage anxiety. This year, many participants have expanded those goals by preparing collaborative performances that reflect the event's "Better Together" theme.

As a longtime supporter of the initiative, Piedmont Augusta CEO Dr. Lily Henson emphasized the clinical and emotional value of the program. "Music therapy engages the mind, body, and spirit in ways that complement

traditional medical care,” said Dr. Henson. “It can enhance cognitive function, reduce stress, and foster emotional well-being — all of which are vital to a patient’s healing journey. Music can spark memory, lift mood, and restore a sense of connection that is deeply healing.”

Guests are encouraged to arrive early to connect with local organizations providing services, resources, and advocacy for individuals with disabilities and their families throughout the CSRA. Resource tables will be open prior to the performance, offering attendees an opportunity to learn more about programs available in the community.

The Music Therapy Showcase is **not a public ticketed event**, but rather a celebration shared with participants' families, friends, caregivers, community partners, sponsors, and invited guests.

Community Chords Group Music Therapy is made possible through the generous support of Presenting Sponsor Piedmont Augusta. Additional support for the 2026 Music Therapy Showcase has been provided by the Creel-Harison Foundation and the Vinea Foundation.

Augusta Symphony's Community Chords brings the joy and benefits of music beyond the concert hall through education programs, community engagement initiatives, and music therapy services. Serving children, adults, and families across the Central Savannah River Area, Community Chords creates meaningful musical experiences that foster connection, inclusion, learning, and well-being while increasing arts access to people of all ages, backgrounds, and means.

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