WHY JAZZ MUSIC?

Jazz music is a genre of uniquely American music spanning over 100 years. Many types of music have had an impact on the definition of jazz over time, ranging from ragtime to blues. Two key elements in jazz – improvisation and syncopation – are also important foundations of medicine, where alternative strategies and approaches must be considered to address the complex problems encountered in children with NF1. Improvisation is the act of creating something without planning, while syncopation is the layering of different rhythms to create something unexpected. Applying the principles of jazz to improve delayed motor and social skills through early intervention, children who attend Beat NF learn about jazz as the quintessential American art form.

LOCATION

The Harold and Dorothy Steward Center for Jazz
3536 Washington Ave., St. Louis, MO 63103

CONTACT

For more information about Beat NF, please contact the Team NF coordinator at clubnf@neuro.wustl.edu.

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WHAT IS BEAT NF?
The Washington University Neurofibromatosis (NF) Center, in collaboration with our partners at Jazz St. Louis and the St. Louis Children’s Hospital Foundation, created Beat NF to provide a therapy program to address frequently delayed skills in young children with NF1. This one-of-a-kind jazz music motor therapy curriculum uses jazz music and physical therapy to promote social, attention, and motor skills in toddlers with NF1, while also fostering healthy parent-child interactions, peer relationships, and jazz appreciation. Each Beat NF session is a series of six consecutive weekly 75-minute classes during which local musicians play original jazz music.

WHAT IS NF1?
Neurofibromatosis Type 1 (NF1) is the most common type of Neurofibromatosis, affecting approximately 1 in 2,500 individuals worldwide. NF1 is more common than cystic fibrosis, hereditary muscular dystrophy, Huntington’s disease and Tay Sachs disease combined. NF1 affects almost every organ system, causing a predisposition for tumors to grow throughout the body. In addition, children with NF1 also struggle with learning, attention, social, and motor skills.

BEAT NF OVERVIEW
The Washington University NF Center and the education department at Jazz St. Louis have developed this novel therapy program. During each Beat NF event, local jazz musicians play live music. Children review rules as a group, learn about a weekly “mystery instrument,” engage in gross and fine motor activities, sing, dance, ask questions, learn and have fun. Educators and musicians from Jazz St. Louis compose and play original music specifically written for these activities. In addition, Beat NF Team members carefully design each week’s program to focus on particular social and motor delays. The progress of each child is tracked on a weekly basis.

HOW WILL BEAT NF HELP MY CHILD?
Children with NF1 can experience a wide variety of physical, social and scholastic challenges. To address these unmet needs, we established a program to support general development while empowering families to manage the types of medical, social, and school problems common in this condition. Using a small group setting approach, Beat NF team members address the delays specific to each individual child, while creating a community for families to talk with other parents. Capitalizing on the collaborative, interactive, and improvisational spirit of jazz, each session is creatively designed to strengthen parent/child relationships and to foster positive peer interactions through interactive and cooperative motor play. This program is provided at no cost to our families.

“(Our son) is loving Beat NF! I love talking with him in the evenings about what he did and the instruments that he got to play.”
- Parent of a 3 year old in the Beat NF program

“We look forward to continuing with the program and have had such a positive experience that we would be open to other NF programs as well. Your team has done a great job!”
- Parent of current Beat NF family