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the Annie Johnson Band, recalled her first TAO program at a convalescent home. She thought she'd need to play more mellow song selections but quickly realized that the songs the clients responded to were blues and rock.

"People with Alzheimer's and those who were almost unconscious were bobbing along and singing to the music, and if they didn't know the words, they were making them up," Johnson said. "There is something about music. It just goes straight to your soul, and there's no interference. It's a magical thing."

Johnson, who's also conducted songwriting workshops for TAO, said the organization created a chance for her to give back and do something positive for someone else.

This is a common sentiment shared with Kelly Murphy, a member of the TAO board of directors. She said that she is often thanked by artists who are appreciative of the opportunity to give someone a good day. Murphy, who works as an experimental aerodynamicist for NASA and runs Harris Creek Acoustic, a private house concert series in Hampton, said the dual purpose of the organization is one of its most attractive features.

"It doesn't seem so hopeless when they're part of the human experience," Murphy said of TAO clients. And on the other side,

"There's a huge community of musicians out there looking to be needed and to use their talent in a meaningful way."

With only two part-time staff members and a very involved board of directors, the mission of the TAO is catching on quickly. During the 2006-07 fiscal year, 130 artists, musicians and instructors presented 142 workshops and programs at 51 facilities in Hampton Roads, serving nearly 4,000 individuals.

TAO has grown in its list of sponsors, also gaining support throughout Hampton Roads with grants from the Norfolk Arts Commission, the Portsmouth Community Foundation, the Virginia Beach Arts Commission, the Virginia Beach Foundation, the Newport News Arts Commission, the Hampton Arts Commission, the Chesapeake Fine Arts Commission and the Virginia Commission on the Arts and Humanities.

"It's a network – a community – of like-minded people," Toboz said. "We've created a framework for the programs, but it's a win-win situation that's taken on a life of its own."

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