



Carmina and Harry Merrill, Andover High School seniors and co-founders of Collective Harminy.

Carmina Merrill, co-founder of Collective Harminy, speaking with a resident of Atria Marland Place during a visit.

# Songs for senior citizens

Andover teens give back through music-based nonprofit

By Caitlin Dee

» CDee@eagletribune.com

ANDOVER — Local teens are serving the community through song as a part of

their non-profit Collective Harminy.

Carmina and Harry Merrill, twins and Andover High School seniors have long shared a passion for music with Carmina pursuing singing and Harry playing the piano respectively.

Yet, music was more than a hobby for the twins, and eventually served as a way

for them to connect with their grandmother suffering from Alzheimer's disease.

"We have a grandparent who suffers from Alzheimer's disease and every time they come over, it's just such a nice experience to play songs for them," Carmina Merrill said.

Inspired by the musical connection formed with

their grandmother, the twins decided to start Collective Harminy, intentionally misspelled to combine their names in 2022. The non-profit focuses on creating a relationship between generations through songs performed by young musicians at local senior centers.

She said she felt the organization would be a perfect

way to engage with members of her community she was mostly unfamiliar with.

"I've lived in Andover almost my whole life, and I've never been able to connect with those in senior living facilities and me and my brother thought this was such a wonderful way to connect with them, and it's just been so much more than we ever thought," she said.

However, good things take time and while the non-profit began in 2022, the twins only recently began performing accompanied by students at local music schools this year.

"We've had guitar before, and more piano and more voice students, it's open to anybody, any instrument, anything that they're interested in doing," Merrill said.

Together, the twins have performed at a variety of senior centers in the area such as Stone Hill at Andover and Atria Marland Place, something she values.

"It's been wonderful

getting the community together in that sense, to bring everyone to engage intergenerationally with people we might not otherwise have the opportunity to engage with," she said.

While the organization makes a positive difference emotionally, it can also be helpful mentally, according to Merrill.

"We found plenty of information about the impact it has on people with dementia and Alzheimers and that's very profound, but the value of music for anybody regardless of what you have going on that was so impactful," Merrill said.

Collective Harminy is off to a strong start and the Merrills are not slowing down, with hopes to grow in the future.

"This next year, we'd love to expand it to even more towns, just generally getting the word out because this is such a wonderful way to bring everyone together and engage more community partners," she said.