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MUSIC THAT MENDS : Musical pediatrician merges talents to help kids with serious illnesses

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What is your idea of a perfect day?

For Dr. Ben Meisel, that might well be the day he learns that his Kickstarter campaign to raise \$15,000 by July 22 to produce the album "A Perfect Day — Music for Kids to Live Well" has not only reached but exceeded the amount.

"So far, we have more than \$9,000, which makes me hopeful that we'll reach our goal," said Dr. Meisel by phone from Valencia, where the pediatrician, social entrepreneur and musician lives with his wife, Dr. Laura Meisel, an internist, and their two daughters, Lea, 11, and Sophia, 8.

"My goal is to build play into health by packaging up summer camp's empowering fun to boost the outlook and health of kids living with significant medical conditions. Camp-inspired music really does a body good! I've witnessed it, and research backs me up," said Dr. Meisel, 44, who grew up in Santa Barbara and graduated in 1988 from Santa Barbara High School.

Longtime Santa Barbarans Dr. Harris and Fredda Meisel are parents of the physician, who earned a bachelor's degree at Stanford University, a medical degree at the University of Pennsylvania and served his residency in pediatrics at UC San Francisco.

Inspiration for the album came from children he has cared for in pediatric urgent care and in his work from 2006 to 2010 with the SeriousFun Children's Network of camps founded by actor Paul Newman.

"There are nine in the United States and nine outside the country. I combined my medical and musical talents as the chief medical adviser and medical director at The Painted Turtle camp near Lake Hughes," said Dr. Ben (as his patients call him).

"Going to camp represents a childhood right of passage. For kids with significant health challenges, their complex daily care management can make a camp experience logistically unattainable. The pioneering work of the SeriousFun Children's Network has made camp experiences possible for these kids, which (has) shown to have positive impact," he said. "The music of 'A Perfect Day' helps them draw upon camp's psychosocial benefits such as positive coping strategies and decreased illness-related stress."

Included in the album are about a dozen songs with titles like "Coming Out of My Shell," "Perfect Day," "Glitter Glue," "Goodnight" and "The Garden Song."

"Five are carefully selected to help the children continue with the spirit of the camp experience," said Dr. Ben, adding that camp sessions are offered from five to 10 days during the summer and year-round on weekends for the children and their families. He plans to offer the album for free to organizations "building play into health," such as SeriousFun Children's Network and Make-A-Wish Foundation, for kids with medical conditions. For the general public, the album will be for sale with a portion of revenue going to these same organizations, he added.

Many well-known Santa Barbara musicians are participating in this project. Those singing or playing with Dr. Ben on the album include Alastair Greene (guitar and bass), Austin Beede (drums), Toad the Wet Sprocket's Glen Phillips (voice), David Piltch (bass) and Tom Ball (harmonica).

Co-producing and engineering the album is Robinson Eikenberry, another Santa Barbaran.

"There is a whole cadre of kids singing with me. Some have medical conditions, and some do not. Some I have invited to participate, and some have gained the chance to sing with me through our Kickstarter campaign, and two of the children are my own daughters," said Dr. Ben. "My goal is for there to be another album in the future made with, by and for children with medical conditions."

The pediatrician, who seems to have boundless energy, said he launched Dr. Ben & Co. in 2013 "with a simple idea to build play into health. As a social entrepreneur, I see tremendous possibilities for patient-empowering music, educational gaming and health entertainment that enable children, teens and families to live well despite serious medical conditions. Funds raised above the \$15,000 needed to produce the album will go toward further development of creative projects that support children and their families," said Dr. Ben.

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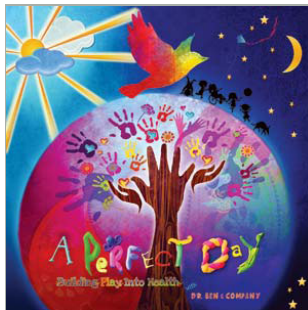
FYI

To contribute funds for the album "A Perfect Day — Music for Kids to Live Well," go to Kickstarter.com, click on "Search Projects" and type in the words "A Perfect Day."

For more information, call 661-964-7125, email drbenmail@gmail.com or go to www.aperfectdayonkickstarter.com.



Dr. Ben Meisel, pediatrician, social entrepreneur and musician, has a Kickstarter campaign to raise \$15,000 by July 22 to produce the album "A Perfect Day — Music for Kids to Live Well." "My goal is to build play into health by packaging up summer camp's empowering fun to boost the outlook and health of kids living with significant medical conditions," said the graduate of Santa Barbara High School. COURTESY PHOTO



Among the musicians participating in the project are friends from junior and senior high schools whose bands have become famous in their own right.

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