



Mind&Melody: Summer Beats Camp

Transforming Summer Through Music & Art for Neurodiverse Youth and Their Families

Camp Term: 5 Weeks | Dates: June 16-July 18th (date is subject to change and flexible)

Hours: 9:00 AM – 2:00 PM (Extended Care Available Until 4:00 PM)

Participants: Up to 30

For over four years, Mind&Melody has been a trusted partner in the City of Doral, building powerful bonds with children and young adults with special needs through our award-winning, music-based programming. Our team doesn't just show up, we *know* our participants, their families, and their stories. Now, we're proud to present Summer Beats, a 5-week summer camp created specifically for neurodiverse children and young adults, designed with intention, love, and a deep understanding of what makes these participants thrive.

What sets us apart?

- Music as a core learning tool: Our proven Mind&Melody methodology uses interactive music to build cognitive, social, and emotional growth.
- Built-in trust: Our team includes staff who have worked with these families for years—creating continuity, comfort, and familiarity.
- Tailored and inclusive: Activities are shaped by direct collaboration and feedback from participants and parents, ensuring a program that honors individual needs.
- Award-winning model: Backed by local and national recognition for innovation in arts, health and wellness.

Need for Summer Camp:

Imagine yourself isolated from a world that doesn't entirely understand how you see it and how you communicate. School is a place where you can socialize and learn how to adapt to the neurotypical world around you, but come summer time you're stuck at home all day, your parents are working, and you're no longer getting that social and educational stimulation you did earlier in the year.

Now imagine yourself as the parent- you find yourself bringing up a child with special needs, and you know how difficult it is for them to adapt to our society that is so eager to turn a blind

eye to people they don't understand and that are different. Your child goes to a special school where you see them flourish with their classmates, and all the while you're able to work and provide for your family. Come summer, work becomes increasingly difficult to accomplish, individualized child care becomes unaffordable, and your child loses out on months of social interaction due to the lack of special needs programs in your area. You see how restless your child becomes, and you start to notice them regressing back into their own world due to the isolating summer months.

These challenges can take a significant toll on caregivers, mostly women. More than 75% of all caregivers, formal and informal, are women¹. 39% of them leave the workforce to care for loved ones, while 34% leave because their work lacks flexibility in hours². The costs of caring for a child with Autism Spectrum Disorder can also be overwhelming, with the majority of expenses going towards special services and lost wages for caregivers.

On average, Autism Spectrum Disorder costs around \$60k annually throughout childhood, with the majority of the costs being for special services and lost wages due to the increase in caregiver demands on one or both parents of the child³.

This cycle of isolation and financial strain for families with special needs children highlights the need for support and resources. We can provide these families with the support they need by providing affordable, quality summer camps.

Solution:

That's where Mind&Melody comes in with an exciting and innovative solution. Our summer camp, Summer Beats, offers a unique opportunity for children and young adults with special needs to experience social, cognitive, and creative stimulation, all while receiving specialized care from our trained staff who, through our already established weekly music sessions, already have a strong connection and relationship with many of the participants. Having delivered consistent weekly sessions for the past 4 years at City of Doral, we've established a strong sense of trust with the families of participants with special needs, and that trust is the foundation for our summer camp.

Our program is tailored to meet the specific needs of each individual child and young adult, providing them with an educational and artistic experience that will help them flourish. With an emphasis on music and its impact on brain development, our approach is designed to give participants the tools they need to succeed. And with our focus on exceptionally qualified staff, we're helping to ease the worry and discomfort that can be so overwhelming for parents when it comes to bringing their children into a new environment.

¹ <https://www.aplaceformom.com/caregiver-resources/articles/caregiver-statistics>

² <https://www.caregiver.org/resource/caregiver-statistics-work-and-caregiving/>

³ <https://www.autismspeaks.org/autism-statistics-asd#:~:text=On%20average%2C%20autism%20costs%20an,on%20one%20or%20both%20parents.>

By providing families with this much-needed support and resources, we're helping to break the cycle of isolation that can be so difficult to overcome. With Mind&Melody's Summer Beats camp, families can rest assured that their child is receiving the care and attention they need to thrive, both socially and academically.

About Mind&Melody

Mind&Melody transforms the lives of people experiencing neurological impairments through music. We work with older adults with or without neurological impairments, active older adults, and kids and young adults with disabilities; we are able to adapt our program to meet the needs of whoever we will be working with. We bring 10 years of experience building and delivering music programs to individuals living with neurological impairments, like dementia and Alzheimer's at long-term care centers, community centers, at home, and online through Zoom.

Our work in Doral

Since the spring of 2021, Mind&Melody has brought our engaging, specialized music program to the special needs community in Doral. Over the past four years, our sessions have become a beloved weekly routine, helping participants build friendships, boost confidence, strengthen social skills, and find joy through music. These transformations are made possible not just by the power of music itself, but by the compassion and dedication of our musicians—like Andrea—who lead with empathy and a genuine desire to connect.

Andrea recently had a touching moment with Sofia, a young woman with Down Syndrome who experienced a regression years ago and has rarely spoken in public since. Though Sofia had been regularly attending our sessions for months and clearly enjoying them, she had never spoken a word. That changed one day when she playfully grabbed Andrea's water bottle. Andrea joked with her, gently trying to discourage her from drinking it, but Sofia went ahead anyway. It was a lighthearted moment—but what happened next was extraordinary. As Sofia handed the bottle back, she looked at Andrea and said clearly, "Here you go."

To an outsider, this might seem small. But for those who know Sofia's story, it was monumental. After months of silence, she chose to communicate verbally—initiating both humor and trust. It was a breakthrough that wouldn't have been possible without Andrea's patience, empathy, and her consistent efforts to make every participant feel seen, safe, and connected.

And this is how all of our musicians approach every session—with heart, intention, and a deep commitment to creating meaningful connections. They don't just teach music; they build trust, spark joy, and meet each participant where they are, helping them grow not only musically, but socially and emotionally.

This same approach will serve as the foundation for our *Summer Beats* camp. Our team will continue to nurture each participant's confidence, creativity, and sense of belonging through individualized attention, playful interaction, and a strong emphasis on connection. Just like with

Sofia, we know that even the smallest moments can lead to powerful breakthroughs when empathy and music come together.

And we don't just stop there. In 2023, we launched our newest initiative—Mind&Melody: GenBeats—a program designed specifically for the parents and caregivers of individuals with special needs. GenBeats provides a dedicated space for them to decompress, connect with one another, and prioritize their own well-being. Through guided musical experiences, participants are able to process emotions, share their stories, and find a sense of release that is often hard to come by in their daily lives. Many have described the sessions as cathartic, offering a renewed sense of clarity and resilience as they continue caring for their loved ones.

Through this ongoing connection with families, we've gained a deep understanding of their needs—especially the need for engaging, meaningful summer experiences tailored to their children. That's why Mind&Melody Summer Beats was born: a natural extension of our mission that brings joy, creativity, and connection into the summer months through inclusive, multidisciplinary programming rooted in empathy, music, and community.

Staff

To ensure that the camp is safe and enjoyable for all participants, we will hire four counselors and 2 RBT license counselors. Two lead counselors (Andrea and Eric who already have an established connection with many of the special needs kids and young adults) will be responsible for overseeing the camp and planning the daily activities. They have extensive experience in working with children and young adults with special needs. Additionally, two assistant counselors will provide support to the lead counselors and help with the daily activities. One RBT Certified counselor will be present at all times in each room for conflict resolution. Moreover, we will also have 2-4 volunteers throughout the day to help the participants and counselors with activities as needed.

Program Overview and Timeline

We have been working with this population for 10 years and with the Doral community for 4 years, and we recognize how intentional the program has to be and how important it is to have the right people on board. We want the program to be as inclusive as possible and this is how we would do it:

We would open it to 30 campers for one 5 week term, from June 16-July 18th (date is subject to change depending on what City of Doral prefers). The campers will be in two separate rooms according to their age, and we would have 1 lead staff per room, 1 assistant staff per room, one RBT certified counselor per room, along with 1-2 volunteers per room. The Lead Staff will be two of our musicians with years of experience working with special needs children and adults who have built a strong connection with many of the participants already. This sense of familiarity and trust will help the participants feel comfortable and at ease as soon as they walk through the door. Assistant staff will consist of individuals with experience in the special needs community (parents, siblings, etc) who are looking for a summer commitment and have the heart and experience to work with this demographic.

Room 1 - Children	Room 2- Young Adults
Lead Staff (1)	Lead Staff (2)
Assistant Staff (1)	Assistant Staff (2)
Behavioral Therapist (1)	Behavioral Therapist (2)
Volunteer (1)	Volunteer (2)

Because of the specific needs that have to be met when working with this population, we need to bring in the most high caliber professionals to lead the programs, assist, and also have two counselors with RBT certification on standby at all times to diffuse any conflict that may arise. The counselors will lead arts and crafts, music, dance, games, and mindfulness/stretching for the participants throughout the 9:00am-2:00pm camp day, specifically curated with the Mind&Melody methodology approach. For parents who work until later and are not able to pick up their children at 2pm, we will offer the chance to extend their children's stay until 4pm for an extra fee. We will be able to determine the fee once registration has been completed and we have a headcount of how many participants will need to stay until 4pm.

Our music program goes beyond just performing music for participants by creating a collaborative and interactive music experience. We bring a team of background checked professional artists who are passionate about working with and trained to work with diverse populations to lead interactive music sessions that consist of performances and interactive activities based around music theory concepts such as rhythm, tempo, dynamics (how loud or soft), conducting and singing. These musical concepts are designed to engage the participants socially and cognitively.

The summer camp sessions will culminate in an art expo and music performance on the last hour of the final day of camp. Parents are welcome to take home their kids' art projects after the camp term has concluded.

Objectives

- Engage participants through multidisciplinary activities
- Encourage social interaction among the participants
- Provide an educational approach to music, art, and movement.
- Provide parents with a recreational outlet for their children in the city of Doral, where there aren't other known summer camps for young adults with special needs.
- Build a sense of community among our staff/volunteers to bridge the gap between neurotypical and neurodivergent individuals.

Outcome Metrics & Evaluation Plan

In addition to staff observation logs, weekly progress summaries, and a final parent feedback survey, we will provide brief, informal daily check-ins at pickup time. These will offer parents a quick overview of their child's participation, engagement, and highlights from the day, fostering ongoing communication and immediate feedback.

Activities

At Mind&Melody, we understand that every child is unique, and we believe that collaboration with parents is crucial in providing the best possible experience for each child. That's why we would like to offer individual preliminary meetings with parents to discuss their children's needs, and identify the best course of action for activities in our summer camp. By working hand in hand with parents, we can gain a deeper understanding of each child's interests, strengths, and challenges, allowing us to tailor our program to meet their specific needs. This collaborative approach ensures that every child has a meaningful and enriching experience at our summer camp, and that parents can have peace of mind knowing that their child is in good hands.

The following activities have already been curated with some parents specific requests in mind and will be incorporated into the summer camp program:

Music:

- Drumming circles
- Music and Movement
- Singing and vocal exercises
- Musical games and dancing
- Jam sessions with instruments and musical equipment

Art:

- Painting and drawing
- Jewelry making
- Collage making and other craft activities
- Guided art activities to develop fine motor skills

Socialization:

- Team-building games and activities
- Group discussions and support circles
- Outdoor sports activities
- Educational Movies

SAMPLE DAILY SCHEDULE

9:00 am- Arrival and social time

9:30-10:45- Arts and Crafts

10:45-11:00- 15 minute break (bathroom, snacks)

11:00-12:00 - Mind&Melody Music Session

12:00-1:00 - Lunch Break

1:00-2:00 - Board games, outdoor time, or movie time

2:00 - Parent pick up

Contingency Plan

Mind&Melody is committed to ensuring uninterrupted programming and the safety of all participants. Our contingency plans include:

- **Inclement Weather or Emergency Closure:** In the event of a weather-related closure or city-declared emergency, camp days will be rescheduled, and families will be notified via phone, text, and email.
- **Staffing Backup:** We maintain a roster of trained substitute teaching artists and support staff who can step in if a team member is unexpectedly unavailable. All substitutes are already vetted and familiar with the program structure and youth needs.
- **Health & Safety:** We follow CDC guidelines for sanitation and illness prevention. If a health-related issue arises (e.g., COVID exposure), virtual music activities may be provided on affected days to maintain engagement from home.

Lunch

Participants should bring their own lunch and snacks in order to best accommodate any dietary needs they may have. In the case participants forget their lunch, we have allotted in the budget costs to purchase participants lunch in these cases.

Budget

\$32,741- Staff Wages and Program Design/ Planning, Coordinating Camp

\$20,625- RBT Certified Individual

\$3,634- Snacks and Supplies

\$500- Level 2 background checks for 5 staff members

\$2,500- Program Liability

Grand total for entire Summer Camp project: \$60,000

Mind&Melody's Unique Value as a Summer Camp Provider

While several programs offer general enrichment for children with disabilities, Mind&Melody's Summer Beats camp is uniquely designed to meet the specific needs of neurodiverse youth and their families:

1. **Neurodiversity-Centered Approach:** Our curriculum is created for neurodiverse youth, not just adapted. Every activity is designed with sensory, social, and emotional needs in mind.
2. **Music and Art as Tools for Growth:** We use music and visual arts intentionally to support self-expression, communication, creativity, and connection — encouraging development in a joyful, accessible way.
3. **Deep Community Roots:** We've worked closely with families in Doral through year-round music programs and have built trusted relationships that support continuity and comfort for returning participants.
4. **Experienced, Specialized Team:** Our staff includes behavior technicians and teaching artists with hands-on experience supporting children with autism and related conditions — not seasonal hires or general counselors.
5. **Low Staff-to-Child Ratio:** We prioritize individual attention with a structure that ensures youth feel safe, supported, and successful throughout the day.

This combination of specialized knowledge, community trust, and creative, strength-based programming makes Mind&Melody an ideal partner for Doral in delivering high-quality, inclusive summer experiences.

Conclusion

At Mind&Melody, we understand the importance of providing children and young adults with a summer camp experience that is both fun and educational, and we are committed to ensuring that our program meets the highest standards of quality and care. This funding will allow us to bring in RBT certified counselors for conflict resolution, hire high caliber qualified counselors with special needs experience, cover supplies and snack costs, and provide us with the necessary planning time to ensure that we deliver the experience that the parents and their children deserve. We believe that this investment is well worth it and will result in a summer camp experience that is truly unforgettable for everyone involved. We look forward to working with you to make this happen. Please find a couple of Letters of Support from the community attached below for your consideration.

Letters of Support from the community:

Village of Key Biscayne Community Center
10 Village Green Way * Key Biscayne, FL 33149
Telephone: 305-365-8900 * Fax: 305-365-8991
www.ActiveIslander.org



5/7/2025

To The City of Doral,

My name is Richard Perez, and I serve as the Special Projects Coordinator at the Village of Key Biscayne Parks and Recreation Department. I am writing in enthusiastic support of Mind&Melody's proposal to host their 2025 "Summer Beats" program for neurodiverse youth in the City of Doral.

Since 2019, the Village of Key Biscayne has proudly partnered with Mind&Melody to bring inclusive music programming to our community, including children with special needs. Their team consistently delivers engaging, well-structured, and joyful experiences that are tailored to meet a wide range of abilities. Our families frequently express appreciation for the positive social and emotional benefits their children receive through these sessions, as well as the professionalism and warmth of the Mind&Melody staff.

Mind&Melody's unwavering dedication to serving individuals with special needs has made a meaningful and lasting impact on our community. They excel at creating a safe, fun, and music-based therapeutic environment where every participant feels seen, valued, and empowered. Their sessions not only foster creativity and social connection but also provide a sense of belonging to those who are often underserved in traditional programming.

I am confident they will bring that same level of excellence and inclusion to the families of Doral. Their thoughtful approach would be a tremendous asset to your summer offerings. Please feel free to contact me directly if you would like further insight into our experience working with Mind&Melody.

Sincerely,

Richard Perez

Special Projects Coordinator

Village of Key Biscayne Parks & Recreation Department

rperez@keybiscayne.fl.gov

(305) 365-8900

To the City of Doral,

The purpose of this correspondence is to bring to your attention how much our son Martin, who has autism, enjoys the music program that is offered by Mind&Melody on Fridays.

The staff is very friendly, patient and they show understanding of the challenges from the special needs community.

We as parents/guardians, love the opportunity that Mind&Melody has given our son to socialize with others, and we definitely trust their ability to create a safe environment.

We highly recommend their services.

Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions.

Kind regards,

The Trigo de Serrano family

305-815-5002

To The City of Doral,

My name is Tula (Vilma) Salomon, Alex Barbeito's mom. My son is an autistic young adult (26 years old) who has been participating in Doral Special Olympics for the past 14 years. He has also been enjoying the Mind&Melody Friday program on and off for the past four years.

We as parents and guardians see the empathy all of the instructors at Mind&Melody have, and how they approach our children with love and acceptance. Mind&Melody creates a safe environment for our children to interact and socialize with friends through music.

After each session, we see how calm and happy our kids feel, a goal that they easily achieve through music and with Mind&Melody's loving instructors.

Mind&Melody has worked with our kids for years, and we know that our kids are in a safe and nurturing environment with them. They've helped them through music and songs, playing instruments, and positive stimulation to help them socialize with their peers for so many years.

Best regards,
Tula Salomon