

Musicians tune to aging to help elderly

MANCHESTER

AGING IS NOT just about getting old. It can be the heartbreaking decline children see as their elders slip away. It's the sustaining beauty of an aging couple's long-lasting love. It can be a child watching his mother cringe when she sees the first lines appear at the corners of her eyes.

These are the messages of aging that come across on all 37 songs captured in the "Life in the Years" two-CD set. The music is the result of a privately funded project not only intended to raise awareness about aging, but the money needed to fund innovative programs that will help elders maintain their independence and homes as long as possible.

This music-driven initiative that began a year and a half ago now is ready for prime time as its creators begin marketing campaigns to sell at least 10,000 CDs in New Hampshire, and they hope, create the spark that will spread the idea across the country and reach their target of 500,000 sales needed to become a gold record, organizers said.

Artists include Natalie Merchant, Livingston

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Taylor, Carly Simon, Emmy award-winning Tracy Newman, six New Hampshire artists and others from across the globe. All contributed music drawn from personal stories of their aging loved ones that spans all genres — country, rock, ballads, blues and rap.

Already about 1,000 CD sets — titled "Life in the Years" and "More Life in the Years" — have been sold locally since they went on sale in January. The set costs \$15.

Money from New Hamp-

shire-based sales is first slated to go toward sustaining an innovative program aimed at keeping seniors in their homes by matching them with people who can provide them care in exchange for a place to live.

It's called "shared homes" and it's based on Home-Share Vermont, a successful program that has been in existence in Vermont for at least a dozen years, said Kathy Boylan, director of senior services at Moore Center Services Inc.

A single mother finding it hard to make ends meet on her own, for example, could move in with an elderly person having trouble keeping up her home and caring for herself, Boylan said. Under the "shared homes" model, the two parties would sign an agreement that would allow the exchange of services, Boylan said.

"The program is very valuable in keeping people off the Medicaid rolls and out of the system," Boylan said.

Moore Center Services Inc., a nonprofit human-service agency that assists people with developmental disabilities and recently expanded to include elder services through its Moore Options for Seniors program, would oversee and facilitate the "shared homes" program in New Hampshire, said Paul S. Boynton, Moore Center Services president and chief executive officer.

Boylan said her office is seeking grants to launch the "shared homes" program, and the CD sales are expected to sustain it.

While the "shared homes" program is slated to be the first to benefit from the "Life in the Years" project, it will be just the first in what its

organizers hope will be many other innovative ideas to help the elderly that the project can help fund.

"The country... is going to be slammed by the number of elderly people needing care. There are not enough programs or resources to effectively care for or treat everybody. We are trying to create a sense of awareness and hopefulness" that will match the magnitude of the problem, Boynton said.

Boynton and David R. Bastien, a Londonderry resident and founder of Musicians for a Cause, are the prime movers behind the project.

Organizers are trying to enlist volunteers who would commit to selling at least 20 CDs each. The goal is to recruit 500 of these "Life in the Years Champions" nationally in order to hit the target goal of selling 500,000 CDs.

Bastien, who also wrote one song on the CD, is working with nonprofit agencies to develop a direct marketing campaign to about 40,000 New Hampshire residents.

The CDs can be bought online at www.lifeintheyears.org and www.amazon.com. They are also available at the Moore Center at 195 McGregor St. and at the Salem Senior Center.

