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NEWS CALGARY & ALBERTA
 Wed, February 13, 2008
Music lifts seniors' lives
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By **TARINA WHITE, SUN MEDIA**

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Calgary senior Olive MacInnis remembers dancing with her sweetheart to the old-time big bands decades ago.

At 86, she doesn't dance as much anymore, but listening to the music still lights up her face and lifts her spirit.

Yesterday, MacInnis joined about 100 local seniors for a free afternoon concert at Irene Besse Keyboards Ltd., 125 - 6999 11 St. S.E.

"Music is a big lift in my life -- it picks you up out of your doldrums," she said.

Fifteen years ago, Besse built a concert hall inside the southeast shop to entertain seniors, and she's been amazed at the benefits of the healing power of music.

"It's very dear to my heart -- I really feel they're neglected," she said before yesterday's concert.

The transformation begins when the musicians play -- toes start tapping, heads nod and, by the end, many are singing along and swaying to the tunes.

"The response is very touching," said Besse.

She fondly recalls one 84-year-old man who hadn't talked in the three years since his wife had died.

At the show, he broke out in song to the amazement of his caregiver.

"He started singing and he hasn't quit talking since," said Besse.

MacInnis said it's soothing to listen to the piano, organ and cello-play songs that date back to the '20s, '30s and '40s.

"We leave with a wonderful feeling of serenity and peace," she said.

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