

The Boston Globe

Newton electrician offers music

By Cindy Cantrell Globe Correspondent, September 2, 2014, 5:43 p.m.



SERVICE CALL: Electrician **Joe Blanchard** of Newton says his customers are invariably shocked to discover that he composes easy-listening songs, while those who know him for his self-taught piano playing are equally surprised by his blue-collar day job.

His favorite endeavor, however, is volunteer work.

Blanchard, who has been self-employed for 40 years, arranges his schedule to play in the lobby at Newton-Wellesley Hospital on Wednesdays from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., and in the second-floor atrium of Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in Boston on Thursdays from 3 to 6 p.m.

He also occasionally volunteers at Tower Hill Botanic Garden in Boylston, Whitney Place Adult Day Health Center in Natick, and Carmel Terrace Assisted Living in Framingham, while also playing paid gigs for local hotels, restaurants, weddings, schools, and clubs.

The oldest of 13 children, Blanchard fell in love with classical music while listening to his father play the piano at home.

While **Richard Blanchard** amassed a repertoire of 700 songs he could play by ear, his son plays his own classically influenced compositions — with the single exception of “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star,” which he reserves for kids.

If a hospital patient or senior citizen compliments his music, Blanchard said, he takes great pleasure in handing them one of his three CDs. He estimates that he has given away a total of 1,500 copies of “Lifecycle,” “Sandpipers on the Beach,” and “Morning Light,” which normally sell for \$15 each. It’s also not uncommon for Blanchard to pay out of pocket to tune many of the pianos on which he plays.

Regardless of the setting, Blanchard said, he most enjoys bringing joy to those who are struggling.

“People really appreciate it when someone comes in and volunteers, and they let you know it,” he said. “Seeing them so happy is very humbling.”

For more information, visit www.joeblanchard.com.