

# RIVIERA BEACH

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Wednesday, May 14, 2008

Most in the audience couldn't see guitarist and songwriter Rod MacDonald as he sang, strummed and played harmonica in a dining room at the Veterans Administration Medical Center in Riviera Beach last week.

But for this group of sightless war veterans, MacDonald's folk songs and ballads were meant to be a treat for the ears.

MacDonald, a Delray Beach musician with eight CDs under his belt, gave an hourlong performance for a small group of patients in the VA Medical Center's Blind Rehabilitation program. His appearance was coordinated through Inspirit, a nonprofit organization that brings live music to people living in restricted environments such as hospitals, nursing homes and correctional institutions.

Patients in the rehabilitation program are those who recently have become visually impaired. Most stay for several weeks to a few months learning how to adjust, officials said.

Seven patients and several staff members listened and sang along as MacDonald performed songs such as *Blowin' in the Wind* by Bob Dylan, *MTA* by the Kingston Trio and *Ruby* by Ray Charles. He also sang the children's favorite *Witch Doctor* and some of his original songs, such as *When You Were Two* and *American Jerusalem*.

MacDonald, who teaches a course in music Americana for Florida Atlantic University's Lifelong Learning program, estimates he has volunteered about half a dozen times for Inspirit.

"I liked that everybody really listened. Everybody really seemed to pay attention," he said.

Kathy Romeo, the recreation therapist assigned to the blind rehabilitation program, said many patients in the program are socially isolated. For them, "it's medicine," she said.

For information about Inspirit, visit the following Web site: [www.inspiritlive.org](http://www.inspiritlive.org).