

COMMUNITY

New Mexico Special Orchestra shines at state fair

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[ALBUQUERQUE, N.M.](#) (KRQE) – A local nonprofit organization had the chance to perform on the first day of the New Mexico State Fair. The New Mexico Special Orchestra was created to help people of all abilities and disabilities share in the joy of making music.

Founder and artistic director Gair Linhart got the idea to create Special Orchestra when he was working at the Los Lunas Hospital and Training School and taught a music and movement class. “Little by little I started to realize that some of our people had talents and had capabilities to play,” Linhart said.

Linhart, a self-described “honkey-tonk musician” took inspiration from how the country and blues genre plays with open-tunings, which would allow for a more

cohesive sound. “It occurred to me that some of those open tunings would allow some of our people, with limited capabilities, to just strum or bow, in order to blend in,” Linhart said.

Shauna Brillhart and her sister Trina have been involved with the organization for five years. Trina plays the tambourine in the band and says she likes to play with her friends, and the orchestra has become like a family.

When Shauna became her caregiver, she learned about the orchestra’s impact on her sister. “I think it’s really beneficial for individuals just to get them out in the community and have a creative outlet,” Shauna said.

The Special Orchestra is an inclusive organization, something Linhart wants the community to know about. “Special Orchestra is for everybody, for people of all abilities. In fact, most of our people do have disabilities but anyone is welcome – we are sometimes joined by talented pros,” Linhart said.

Those interested in supporting the organization can donate online. For more information, visit the [New Mexico Special Orchestra’s website](#).