



Brain-Music Connections Easy As Do-Re-Mi with iPod Program

No microphones are needed but smiles are welcome for the Clement Manor stars participating in the Music and Memory program. Instead of applause, residents sing along to well-loved tunes on iPods provided through the program. Part of a national initiative, the program helps people with Alzheimer's and related dementias find renewed meaning and connection in their lives through the gift of music. Clement Manor's Music and Memory program began with just 10 iPods in 2015 and has steadily grown to bring music to residents in skilled care, memory care and long-term care.

Health Center Activity Director Tom Brefka oversees the program which enriches physical and emotional well-being. "Singing activates another part of the brain that the spoken word doesn't," explains Brefka. "Seeing people light up as soon as the music turns on is wonderful."

As a certified Music and Memory program provider, Clement Manor provides staff two days of training on the many benefits of music for individuals coping with Alzheimer's and related dementias. Research has shown that music reduces agitation and anxiety associated with dementia and increases attention and cooperation. Music also improves social interactions, increases engagement with family members, lowers blood pressure and helps with sleep.

Most importantly, listening to music awakens the spirit and fosters happiness. According to Suzanne Kletch, whose mother suffered from Alzheimer's, music on her iPod brought her life. "With Alzheimer's, my mom lost her ability to do the many things she enjoyed," Kletch remembers. "When her headphones were placed on, she looked genuinely happy, calm and peaceful. You would see her toe tapping, head bobbing, lips moving, a smile, and a sparkle in her eyes." Kletch recalls that

occasionally her mother even sang again as the music provided her with the ability to recall words that she had lost.

Each resident's iPod holds about 100 favorite songs. Family members provide staff with input on their loved one's favorite songs that are downloaded along with samples from popular genres. Some of the categories include favorite hymns and spiritual songs, patriotic tunes, greatest hits, easy listening, musicals and soundtracks, jazz, classical, crooners like Bing Crosby and Frank Sinatra, and big band numbers. The songs are then downloaded to create a customized playlist for each resident in the program.

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Residents listen to their iPods for 45 minutes to an hour at a time. Originally scheduled for morning listening sessions, the schedule was recently fine-tuned to make the iPods available all day long. Meal times as well as other transitions during the day and evening are easier for residents when they've had a chance to listen to music first. Since music has a lasting effect, the calming benefits from listening provide comfort for an additional 1-2 hours. 🌸

Photo above: The family of Geraldine Kletch makes a donation of iPods for other residents to enjoy.