

The Power of Music

Music can be a powerful source of joy and comfort for people with dementia and for those around them. Twice a month, the boardroom at Mills Community Support is the place to be to witness that power in action.



On the 1st and 3rd Tuesdays of each month, from noon to 2pm, **Mills Community Support** and **Community & Primary Health Care** partner to deliver a **Music & Memories** luncheon program, a very special program for people with Alzheimer's or related dementia.

The program starts with a hearty meal served in a cozy, casual setting, and as usually happens when food is involved, this is a time to chat, interact and share a few laughs. Lunch is followed by music or other theme related activities geared for fun and enjoyment. Most of the time lunch and sing-a-longs take place at the Mills Board Room, where **the talented local entertainers engage participants in singing and sometimes in dancing to the music.** Occasionally the group heads out on the accessible MCS bus to see the fall leaves, or have a picnic at the park followed by a drive to Scoops in Pakenham for an ice cream cone.

"Music and Memories is a very special program. It is a wonderful opportunity to socialize, sing and reminisce. There is nothing like the power of music to kick start memories of growing up, first dances, first kisses, best friends – it can bring back a thousand precious memories," says Patti Lennox, Manager, Caregiver Support & Community Programs Community & Primary Health Care



When words fail, music provides a way for a person with dementia to connect with others and engage with memories and emotions. Most people associate music with an important event, or a person in their life, along with a wide array of emotions and the connection can sometimes be so strong that hearing a particular tune long after the event has happened can evoke a memory of it.

Research tells us that music can shift a person's mood, manage stress-induced agitation, stimulate positive interactions, facilitate cognitive function and coordinate

motor movements. This happens because rhythmic and other well-rehearsed responses require little to no cognitive or mental processing. Even for individuals who have progressed into late-stage dementia, music from their childhood - particularly singing songs in the language they learned them in - sparks the greatest involvement and interest.

*“Some of our clients from the Day Program take part in **Music and Memories** and thoroughly benefit from the program. Music touches the heart and soul of everyone especially those affected by a dementia. When communication and verbal skills are impaired, music has a way of speaking to you. It brings back old memories and helps create new ones. The socialization and companionship that the participants experience is very therapeutic. **Music and Memories** is a program that we support and encourage our clients to participate in.”*

Melinda Coleman Client Services Manager, Alzheimer Society Lanark Leeds Grenville

5 Reasons why music boosts brain activity

1. Music evokes emotions that bring memories.
2. Musical aptitude and appreciation are two of the last remaining abilities in dementia patients.
3. Music can bring emotional and physical closeness.
4. Singing is engaging.
5. Music can shift mood, manage stress and stimulate positive interactions.



The **Music and Memories** program, which is largely volunteer supported, has been offering a wonderful opportunity to socialize, sing and reminisce for 20 years. The program not only benefits participants, but can also be a great opportunity for caregivers to have some time for themselves while their loved one is attending the lunch.

To take part in this special program, all it takes is to pick up a phone and call **the Home Support office of Mills Community Support at (613) 256-4700 to register. Cost for the lunch is \$10.00** which includes a full meal, an hour of entertainment, and transportation from Carleton Place or Almonte, if required.