

Celebrating Twenty Years: Music & Memory, A New Program at DCHC

One of our most exciting and recent investments in and commitment to Douglas County Health Center is a resident-focused program called Music & Memory. This program was brought to our attention in late 2012 as an initiative that is seeing great success in long-term care facilities. The concept is simple: Use the power of music to reach residents who might otherwise feel isolated or disengaged by "tapping deep memories not lost to dementia and enabling them to feel like themselves again, to converse, socialize and stay present.*"

Getting started with the program, the foundation paid for an employee in the Therapeutic Recreation department (rec therapy) to attend the required training module and, once completed, the health center became an official Music & Memory site. From there, rec therapy began implementation through acquiring iPods, purchasing songs through iTunes, and downloading compact discs to an iTunes account with music that would be used to customize resident iPods. Over four months in early 2013 rec therapy partnered with four Clarkson College students to assist with Music & Memory resident assessments. Assessments included an interview with the resident or family members to identify the resident's favorite songs; these songs would be included in that resident's individual iPod song list. Additionally, rec therapy department developed policies and procedures regarding this program and sought input from nurse managers and other key staff to make certain the roll-out of Music & Memory would be successful.

Our foundation then solidified its hopes and aspirations for this program by funding the purchase of individual iPods for residents, spending \$2,500.00 that was donor designated for Music & Memory. It is exciting to communicate to you that feedback about the implementation has been truly encouraging. Residents who don't participate in a lot of activities have a tendency towards isolation, have more behavioral issues, or those don't have visitors or family support can and do respond well to music. We started small with the program and fortunately have been able to expand to nearly every resident at DCHC who would like to participate.

Equally interesting (and thrilling!) is that Music & Memory is only gaining in recognition nationally. In the time that the program has been in use at Douglas County Health Center, there have been features on ABC News, NPR, Science Friday, The New Age of Advice, and more. Research is showing more and more that the music lights up the brain and helps stimulate cognitive activity. Not only does music calm and help residents be present through feeling less isolated, the Alzheimer's Association of Toronto finds that caregivers benefit too. These positive outcomes are bolstering.

It has been exciting for us to be able to partner with rec therapy to bring Music & Memory to residents at Douglas County Health Center. Our foundation mission, simply stated, is to improve the quality of life for long-term care residents and it is initiatives such as this that are so well aligned with what we do.