

The Inter-Mountain

Music & Memory

ELKINS – Residents at a local long-term care facility are enjoying personalized music as part of their therapy.

In October, The Elkins Rehabilitation and Care Center became the first Music & Memory facility in West Virginia.

According to a press release from the center, this certification ensures families their loved ones will have access to the transformative therapeutic benefits of personalized music. The new program is consistent with the facility's commitment to person-centered care, officials said.

“We try to – as much as we can – deinstitutionalize what we do here and sometimes that's hard because the facts are the facts, it is a facility but we try as hard as we can to make it as home-like and personal (as possible) for each resident that's here,” ERCC Executive Director Denise Campbell said.

ERCC employees underwent training at Music & Memory seminars to prepare them for the program.

Music & Memory was founded in 2006 by Dan Cohen. With iPods sweeping the nation and digital music technology gaining in popularity, he came up with the idea of bringing the devices into nursing homes and introducing personalized playlists to patients in hopes of improving their cognitive ability. After exhibiting success, Cohen received funding and created Music & Memory as a 501c3 non-profit organization.

According to the program's website, decades of neuroscience research about the brain-music connection have built a strong case for the ways that familiar music associated with significant personal memories can help dementia patients reconnect with the world.

The organization utilizes its certified Music & Memory care facilities – more than 60 of them across the United States – to continually evaluate the impact of the program on residents.

Through these evaluations, officials found 71 percent of respondents believed the program had helped many of their residents suffering from anxiety, 74 percent felt personalized music helped professional staff provide care for residents and 94 percent of responding professionals said they would be very likely to recommend the program to other long-term care facilities.

Campbell said employees at the facility are pleased to participate in the nationally acclaimed program.

“I know music is very important. We all can agree that sometimes when you hear a song it takes you back to a time in your life,” she said. “A lot of times we associate music with happy events so I think that really helps the population that we take care of – that they can go back to a place and time that is a happy memory for them.”

Campbell said the focus of the program will initially be in the facility's dementia unit.

“Our ultimate goal is patient- and resident-oriented first – that's our primary concern and if there's a program that we know has been proven to be effective in improving the quality of life for our residents, we will do whatever we need to do to enhance that,” she said.

To fund the start-up costs for initial iPods and headphones, ERCC matched a donation from an anonymous member of the community.

In order to raise funds for the purchase of additional iPods for the

program, a benefit concert featuring local musicians is scheduled for Jan. 4 at the Randolph County Community Arts Center. A special benefit concert by pianist Jack Gibbons is also in the planning stages, officials said.

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