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VILLAGES IN-DEPTH
 HOW OUR COMMUNITY WORKS

The Art Of Healing

Music and art are plentiful throughout The Villages — and that has extra benefits. Mental health researchers have discovered that exposure to either can sharpen the mind, lift the spirits and give people a calmer, happier life. — *By Kristen Fiore, Daily Sun*

MENTAL HEALTH BENEFITS OF ART THERAPY

Self-discovery: Creating art can help you acknowledge and recognize feelings that have been lurking in your subconscious.

Self-esteem: The process will give you a feeling of self-accomplishment and improve self-appreciation and confidence.

Emotional release: It can give you a healthy outlet for expressing and letting go of feelings and fears.

Stress relief: Creating art can be used to relieve stress and relax your mind and body.



Music and art can heal.

Science has shown that exposure to these activities can ease anxiety and depression, help cancer patients going through chemotherapy and even revive the frail memories of people lost in the fog of Alzheimer's disease or dementia.

Hundreds of residents of The Villages are involved in programs that use art or

music to improve their quality of life.

And in a community with nearly 100 resident music groups and more than 130 art clubs and organizations, even people not involved in therapeutic programs have a chance to enrich their lives and enjoy some of the same benefits.

"It gets me going in the morning," says Ellie Clark, a Parkinson's patient participating in a music program at Elan Spanish Springs Assisted Living and Memory Care. "I can dance to it. I can hum, and I enjoy humming. I can wiggle my toes. It makes me feel alive."

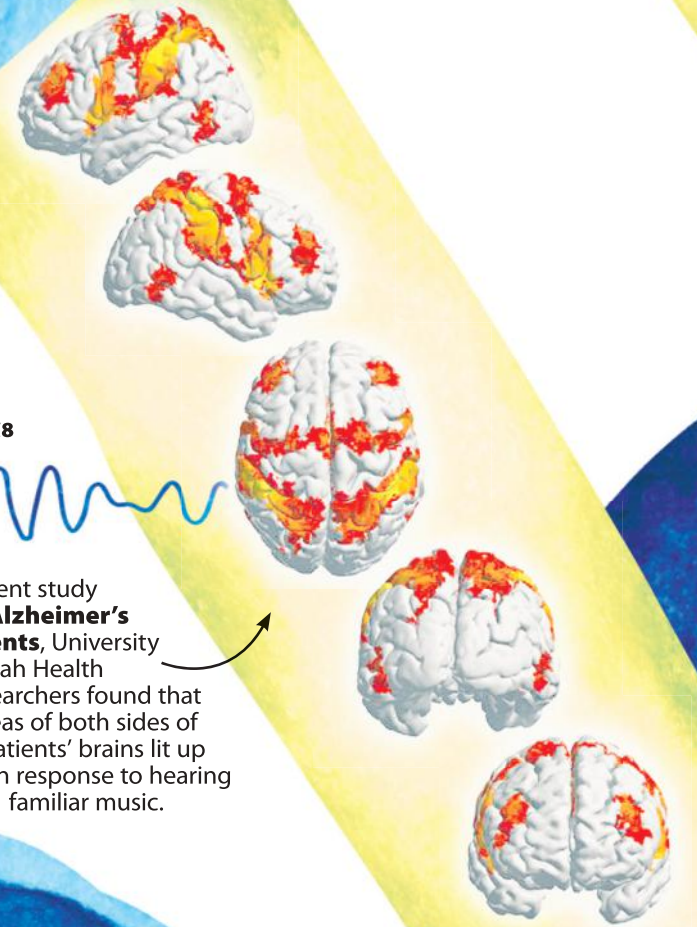
Clark, wearing a floral shirt and a fluffy purple scarf, was one of more than

Please See **HEALING, C8**



Researchers have found that adding music therapy to standard **cardiac rehabilitation** led to better control of blood pressure along with better general and mental health than rehab alone.

In a recent study of 17 **Alzheimer's patients**, University of Utah Health researchers found that areas of both sides of patients' brains lit up in response to hearing familiar music.



Scans from the *Journal of Prevention of Alzheimer's Disease*

THEN & NOW

The Making of Music Therapy

Notable physical and emotional responses by wartime patients helped launch the treatment and profession, but the idea of music for healing has a long history.

400s-300s BC

The idea of music as a healing influence that could affect health and behavior is at least as old as the writings of Aristotle and Plato.

1789

The earliest known reference to music therapy appeared in 1789 in an unsigned article in *Columbian Magazine* titled "Music Physically Considered."



1903

Interest in music therapy continued to gain support during the early 1900s, leading to the formation of several short-lived associations, including in 1903, when Eva Augusta Vesceilus founded the National Society of Musical Therapeutics.



1939-1945

In World War II, soldiers who were badly wounded or shellshocked would be put in hospitals. Hoping for improvement, doctors decided to bring in musicians to serenade the patients, which started the trend of using music and medicine for healing in hospitals.



1998

The American Music Therapy Association was formed as a merger between the National Association for Music Therapy and the American Association for Music Therapy. AMTA united the music therapy profession for the first time since 1971.

TODAY

Recognition of music therapy by public and government agencies highlights the progression of the profession. Partnerships within the music therapy and neuroscience communities are growing stronger, leading to expanded access to this form of treatment.



Source: American Music Therapy Association

from the front page

VILLAGES IN-DEPTH

Get Involved in Art and Music

Here are just a few ways to experience art and music in The Villages. There are several more opportunities outlined in each Thursday's edition of the Recreation News.

Learn an Instrument

The Ukulele Players Club meets at 11 a.m. Thursdays at Lake Miona Recreation Center. For more information, visit ukuleleplayersclub.com

Learn a craft

Iris Folding, a paper craft technique, meets at 9 a.m. the second and fourth Fridays at Colony Cottage Recreation Center.

Try Cardio Drumming

This exercise class meets at 12:30 p.m. Fridays at Eisenhower Recreation Center and at 11:30 a.m. Wednesdays at Lake Miona Recreation Center.



Participants in Cardio Drumming use drumsticks to tap on exercise balls to get their heart rates pumping to the beat of the music.

Daily Sun file

HEALING

Continued from C1

20 Parkinson's and Alzheimer's patients sitting with their caregivers and loved ones in a crescent-formation around music therapist Alexis Schweizer. She strummed a guitar and sang songs with them, such as "Oh, What A Beautiful Mornin'."

For Bob Donaldson, a Parkinson's patient who the group lovingly calls "Bootsy," it's a chance to do something with his wife and relive the days when he was part of a chorus in Miami.

Manny Schembari, another patient, likes the socializing.

"It gives me a chance to go out and meet people," Schembari says. "I've always enjoyed music, and I find it really soothing. It relaxes me."

Music Stirs the Brain

There is evidence that music memories are processed in a part of the brain that seems to be spared in many people with Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia, according to Suzanne Hanser, a professor and founding chair of the music therapy department at Berklee College of Music in Boston.

This is why music can help them.

"Music engagement with a qualified music therapist can allow for deep relaxation on

one hand, and energy enhancement on the other," Hanser said. "Tendencies to become agitated or aggressive may be tamed through specific evidence-based music therapy interventions."

Although many Alzheimer's patients appear apathetic and lack facial expression, Schweizer said she sees smiles and bright eyes during music therapy sessions.

Researchers from University of Utah Health did brain scans of 17 Alzheimer's patients and found that areas of both sides of their brains lit up in response to music they had selected.

For people with failing bodies and minds, the melodies stir something deep within.

During her sessions, Schweizer leads the group in singalongs and games like "Guess the Decade" and "Name that Tune." Everyone involved gets some kind of instrument to play, from tambourines to bells to wear on their wrists.

"It can be a tool for relaxation, and a form of self-expression," Schweizer said. "They may be frustrated with trying to talk, but when they hear a song from their time, they can remember the words and sing it."

Beyond brain illnesses, music therapy can directly benefit people with cancer, Hanser said.

These patients use music therapy to find meaning in their situation: writing

songs, listening to music with messages that resonate and analyzing lyrics.

"Music therapy provides coping strategies for pain, stress and side effects of treatment," Hanser said. "These individuals work with music therapists to express their feelings and their experiences of having a life-threatening condition."

Doctors know that it works, and not just for the ailing. Walk into the lobby of The Villages Hospital and you'll be greeted with the sounds of soothing piano melodies.

More than 50 musicians volunteer with the hospital auxiliary and play in the main lobby, the surgery atrium, the rehabilitation room and even in patients' rooms.

Tony Soldano, the volunteer chair of the musicians, said he and the other players can see how their music affects people, especially visitors and staff.

"I've seen a lot of doctors and nurses sit down in the lobby and relax," Soldano said. "Many staff members have come up to me and said they love it and that it calms them, the patients and the families."

Rich Tisovec, a volunteer musician for Florida Cancer Specialists, said that the music is intended to decrease blood pressure, and it does.

"Doctors tell me that previous to us, the patients' blood pressures were running very high," Tisovec said. "After us, they're down to a normal pressure."

Please See **NEXT PAGE**

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1. Hamstra, D. A., Mariados, N., Sylvester, J., Shah, D., Karsh, L., Hudes, R., Sc. D. (2017). Continued Benefit to Rectal Separation for Prostate RT: Final Results of a Phase III Trial. International Journal of Radiation Oncology Biology Physics, 97(5), 976-985.

2. Hamstra, D. A., Mariados, N., Sylvester, J., Shah, D., Gross, E., Hudes, R., Michalski, J. (2017). Sexual Quality of Life Following Prostate Intensity Modulated Radiotherapy (IMRT) with a Rectal/Prostate Spacer: Secondary Analysis of a Phase III Trial. Practical Radiation Oncology, In Press.

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from the front page

VILLAGES IN-DEPTH



Volunteer Tony Soldano, of the Village of Belle Aire, plays the piano Jan. 24 in the lobby of The Villages Regional Hospital.

Bill Mitchell
Daily Sun

Give Back: Volunteer Musicians

Put your skills in music to good use by volunteering with groups like the Tri-County Caregiver Resource Center. Call Amy Cearley at 352-775-2952. Here's a look at two more organizations:

The Villages Regional Hospital Auxiliary: Volunteers are always needed, and you don't have to play piano on a professional level. Contact volunteer chairman of musicians, Tony Soldano, at anthony Soldano735@gmail.com or 352-552-0600.

Florida Cancer Specialists: The Villages group, the Comfort Music Players, is currently full, but substitutes are needed when snowbird members are away. Contact Rich Tisovec at shovexl@gmail.com or 404-375-1170.

Continued from Previous Page

Tisovec, who went through cancer treatment himself, said he knows how traumatic being a patient can be.

"I remember sitting in the lobby waiting for my treatment with nothing but an old broken-down TV and two-year-old magazines," he said. "You sit there and ruminate about your life and worry what is going to happen."

With music, you see people start to calm down and tap their toes, he said.

"Music has the unique ability to stimulate multiple regions of the brain including the hippocampus and amygdala, which are responsible for memory and emotion," said Heather Schweizer, a neurologist at The Villages Hospital.

Listening to happy music can help lift anyone's mood, even people with depressive illnesses, according to overview of research on music and health published by the Harvard Medical School. Music can reduce stress, lower a surgery patient's blood pressure, improve heart function and even help people over 65 with motor control.

Catherine Salmons, a behavioral health therapist at Colony Care Center, aims for benefits like these when she teaches her movement therapy class called "Mind-in-Motion."

"Each month, we work with a specific theme or focus, designed to increase body awareness and ease of movement, as well as using movement to bring about an emotional change, such as reducing depression or anxiety," Salmons said.

Mind-Body Workout

Each session has a different focus, and Salmons picks play-lists to reflect each theme.

What all the sessions have in common is calm and quiet music for breathing and warm-up and a song that transitions into what Salmons calls the "movement space."

The music gets more energizing as the session goes on, and then goes down to a piece that invites reflection, expression and improvisation.

"I can see people becoming more calm, improving mood and trying on a more positive state of mind," she said.

Music is not alone in its ability to bring down levels of stress hormones and replace them with a relaxation response.

At Buffalo Crossings Assisted

Living Facility, a small group gathers for an art class led by Buffalo Crossings activities director Barbie Smerecki and art teacher Michelle Rhodes.

The art classes give the residents a place to calm down, make something and reminisce, Smerecki said.

"The outlet is so different than a discussion group or something," she said. "You're actually physically making something and have a product to take home with you."

Rhodes, who travels to various assisted living and memory care facilities to teach art classes, said that especially for people with Alzheimer's, the classes are relaxing.

"I've had caregivers tell me, 'You have to be careful because this one has tempers,'" Rhodes said. "And then once they sit down, I guess because they're focused on something, they calm down. The sad part is, I had one woman who painted and then she got up and was walking away and I said, 'That's a beautiful painting,' and she said, 'Oh, I didn't do that.' It's that quick. They forget that they even did it."

But many remember. They

look forward to the classes because they enjoy them, and their memory for things that they enjoy doesn't go away, Rhodes said.

Making New Memories

Smerecki said that many residents hang their paintings all over their walls.

"They have their own art galleries," she said.

A team of Dutch researchers found art activities help regulate emotional impulses, strengthen awareness, create a stronger sense of identity and change how people behave toward others.

Of course, you don't need to be physically or mentally ill to benefit from art and music.

In a community with almost 3,000 resident-lifestyle clubs, it's not hard to find a space to create or enjoy art and music.

"It automatically gives you joy," said Bill Davis, director of The Villages Pops Chorus. "Any time you can have something positive like that in your life, it just makes a huge difference."

Davis said that there's nothing quite like performing for a live audience, and it's not

just about the applause.

"You can feel it sometimes, that the audience is with you and feeling what you're feeling," he said.

Jan Barlow, who teaches an Iris Folding class at Colony Cottage Recreation Center, said that doing art on a regular basis has been therapeutic for her.

"It's usually very relaxing, and it gets your mind off everything else because you have to concentrate on what you're doing," Barlow said. "You meet a lot of great people, too."

Villagers also have the chance to learn how to play new instruments.

In Tim Robinson's Ukulele Players club at Laurel Manor, inexperienced and experienced players play together. People get a sense of accomplishment, while testing their motor skills and memories, Robinson said.

"It's a personal achievement for people who always wanted to play an instrument or used to play one," Robinson said.

There is also evidence that musicians tend to age better, according to Jerri Edwards, a professor at the University of South Florida in the college of Medicine Psychiatry and Behavioral Neurosciences.

"They show less decline in

mental quickness and better abilities to process auditory information," Edwards said.

No matter where you are in life, exposure to music can help.

"Music therapy is indicated for people of any ability or disability because it does not require verbal processing or insight in order to experience benefits," Hanser said. "It goes right to the heart and can affect the mind, body and spirit."

Kristen Fiore is a senior staff writer with The Villages Daily Sun. She can be reached at 352-753-1119, ext. 5270, or kristen.fiore@thevillagesmedia.com.

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