***THE POSITIVE EFFECTS OF MUSIC ON DEMENTIA & ALZHEIMER’S PATIENTS***

John Moorhouse is a Singer/Pianist living in Brantford, Ontario, Canada. He was born and raised in Lambeth, Ontario. He embarked on a music career thanks to his Grandmother, Muriel who taught classical piano and was known as the ‘The horse-and-buggy piano teacher from Euphemia Township’.

Music has taken him around the world where he has shared the same stage as some of the most famous bands and singers such as Janis Joplin and Sly and The Family Stone.

He has been entertaining at senior’s facilities all over southern Ontario every day for close to twenty-five years.

This story is a testament to all seniors for the way that they enrich our lives with their experience, kindness, enthusiasm, appreciation and love of music.

The power of music provides patients with an outlet for stimulation, communication and expression of their feelings. It restores and promotes physical, emotional and spiritual health.

The rewards that John receives from providing musical entertainment to seniors over the years has greatly enriched his life and provided him with many great memories.

While entertaining for seniors, John witnesses the positive effect that music has.

At a nursing home in London, Ontario, there is a lady who always sits beside him at the piano. She is in the advanced stages of Alzheimer’s and has lost the ability to communicate or remember anything. When he starts to sing one of her favorite songs, she becomes alert and sings along knowing every word. It is amazing to see this delightful little old lady come to life, returning to the person she was before Alzheimer’s took its hold.

At a senior’s facility in Brantford, Ontario, an elderly blind resident had been a successful Country and Western performer in the U.S. The nursing home has a set of his favorite Sing Along DVDs that he sits and plays over and over while he sings along. John entertains there weekly and the fellow is always anxiously waiting for John to start his performance.

At the London, Ontario Alzheimer’s Day Program the clients get up and dance when John starts his performance. No one is self-conscious of whether they know how to dance. Everyone has fun and lots of laughs.

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John finds that music is a big part of most senior’s lives when they are in facilities. They are always checking their calendars and circling when the next music performance will be. The music energizes and engages them with the toe tapping, singing along, smiling and clapping. Seniors zone in on songs from their era and their own musical history. The songs that they loved to dance to bring back emotions and memories.

John sees how folks with dementia and Alzheimer’s respond to favorite old songs. Often a Clinician will tell him about a certain Alzheimer’s patient who does not know his or her own children and is totally confused as to where they are. This patient sings along word for word to many of the songs during John’s performance.

Alzheimer’s and Dementia patients become agitated and confused in their day to day routine. Some patients are unsettled, unsure of what is going on or are experiencing a great deal of anxiety. He has observed over the past twenty some odd years how music has a calming effect and makes them feel more relaxed.

Live musical performances and sing along DVDs played on the screen can create an enhanced social event where family members can enjoy the company of their loved one at a common event. It brings everyone together and provides an activity that all can take part in.

There is no stress, just relaxation and fun.

Sometimes the DVDs fill the gap between activities and are used to pass the time while travelling on an outing. Activity Directors who purchased Sing Along With John DVDs have said that their residents have great fun participating in sing alongs on the bus.

In addition, they are a welcome relief for times when a facility is under lockdown due to an outbreak and family nor entertainers are allowed in.

Family members often purchase sing along DVDs for a parent who is now living with them. They are sometimes faced with the dilemma of ‘what to do’ with a loved one during the day that will relieve the caregiver and at the same time engage the housebound senior. The use of sing along DVDs can be a very important component in the daily routine. A parent or spouse who is descending into dementia may still have the ability to sing along to music when the words to the songs are displayed on the screen for them.

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For some seniors, the loss of their strong connection with their religious faith is very distressing. Many seniors are housebound and are no longer able to attend church that has been an integral part of their life. Family members hold church services within their own home using a service being played on the television or when a televised service is unavailable, a Gospel sing along DVD is used. Many find religious music from their faith soothing and comforting.

John is sometimes approached by a senior at a facility where his sing along DVDs are played for a recreation program. He is told how much he or she enjoys his regular televised musical programs. Because the DVDs are played on the television as are other TV programs, the senior assumes that John is a celebrity.

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