

Bethany Village Sees Life-Changing Results in Assisted Living and Skilled Nursing Residents with High-Tech Music Therapy

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ABSTRACT

Bethany Village has seen surprisingly rapid and positive results through two new high-tech music therapies for residents in assisted living and skilled nursing at the continuing care retirement community. The Music and Memory grant seeks to provide evidence that individualized music therapy will improve the quality of life and generate a variety of therapeutic outcomes for long-term care residents.

FULL TEXT

MECHANICSBURG, Pa., March 8, 2012 /PRNewswire/ -- Bethany Village has seen surprisingly rapid and positive results through two new high-tech music therapies for residents in assisted living and skilled nursing at the continuing care retirement community. One program has put 48 iPods and personalized playlists into the hands (and ears) of residents age 85 to 97. Another tool, Beamz, lets residents create music by interacting with laser beams, offering a unique and motivating type of fine motor therapy.

"We have seen remarkable results rather quickly with these music therapies that ultimately improve residents' quality of life," said Susan Crossley, director of recreation, Oaks Skilled Nursing at Bethany Village. "The iPod program, especially, has changed residents' behavior, which then affects the whole attitude of other residents around them."

Last fall, Bethany Village was awarded one of 15 nationwide research grants through the Music and Memory Foundation and the Institute for Music and Neurologic Function in New York. The Music and Memory grant seeks to provide evidence that individualized music therapy will improve the quality of life and generate a variety of therapeutic outcomes for long-term care residents. Crossley just started recording measurable decreases in behaviors such as communicating distress, depression, pain and gains in improved quality of life.

"It means so much more than us bringing in entertainment for an hour," said Crossley. Residents use and respond to the music for different reasons. For some, it's just enjoyable. For restless residents or those who just need to be busy all the time, the music has a calming effect. For some with cognitive or memory loss, medications have been decreased and some anti-anxiety drugs were eliminated.

Resident Carolyn McMillan explained, "Words to songs that I forgot come rolling over me when I hear the songs. I didn't think they were still in my head, but they are. I love music, especially stage shows. When I hear the songs and things I like, it just carries me along. With an iPod, you can listen for a long time. It just makes me happy and makes me feel good."

For one resident, 94, whose particular kind of deafness caused her to often communicate distress, the iPod was life-changing. "This resident sometimes seemed to enjoy very little in life, and now she's singing along to the music," said Lori Geissler, LPN and charge nurse. "The whole attitude of the other residents was affected, and when the music calms her, it calms the rest of the residents, as well."

That resident's son, who wanted to remain anonymous, described the music therapy's effect on his mother like this. "From her earliest memories, she has taken comfort from music," he said. "We decided to move ahead and determine whether [the iPod] was a good thing or not. Many of us have witnessed the calming effect of the music,

sometimes almost instantly. . . . It has eliminated her 'as needed' medication. We can see her softly singing and recognizing the sound. It's almost as though the iPod has given her music back."

Beamz system fun but with serious applications

Beamz, which is used by Bethany Village primarily for occupational therapy, has met with similar success at the community. "One gentleman comes in first thing in the morning before I'm here and turns it on to play. However, Beamz does have serious applications and benefits," said Crossley. Six laser triggers and two button-controlled triggers activate up to 64 independently controlled sequences of musical notes or events.

A resident whose Parkinson's disease creates difficulty with coordination and spatial perception has been using the system routinely. "She may want to pick up her fork, but ends up moving her hand a few inches in the wrong direction," explains Crossley. "The sound emitted from the lasers helps give her feedback on where she needs to be. She knows immediately if she moved her hand in the right direction. It helps her adjust her movements to make up for the perception deficit. The Beamz also allows creativity, enhancing self-esteem and maintaining individuality, but it's also just plain fun."

Bethany Village is located near Mechanicsburg in Lower Allen Township and is an accredited continuing care retirement community. Bethany Village provides a wide variety of programs for retirement living. For more information, visit www.BethanyVillage.org.

Bethany Village is a CARF-CCAC-accredited continuing care retirement community that is part of Asbury Communities, Inc., which provides management and support services for a system of continuing care retirement communities for older adults. It is ranked by Leading Age and Ziegler Capital Markets Group's AZ 100 as the 15th largest not-for-profit multi-site senior living organization in the country.

SOURCE Bethany Village

Credit: Bethany Village

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