



Virginia Association of Counties ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS



APPLICATION FORM

All applications must include the following information. Separate applications must be submitted for each eligible program. **Deadline: June 3, 2019.** Please include this application form with electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).

PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: County of Henrico
Program Title: Music and Memory
Program Category: Customer Service

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Name: Anthony McDowell
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Program Overview

Inspired by the documentary film *Alive Inside*, Henrico County Public Library staff members combined a love of music and passion for serving the aging to create the Music & Memory program. Music & Memory seeks to spark opportunities for older adults to connect to the past and others using popular music of their youth. Already passionate about music and skilled in research, staff from Henrico County's Mobile Library Services purchased vinyl records of artists from the 1930s-50s, and researched and compiled artist biographies, to play for and inspire discussions with residents of local Senior communities. The program successfully opens a dialogue between Seniors and their peers about their past and what music means and has meant to them. Music & Memory stimulates deep memory in older adults, opening up their ability to communicate. The program builds a bridge between both people, and the past and present, enriching lives and fostering a sense of community for older adults and those with memory disorders.

Problem/Challenge/Situation Faced by Locality

Henrico County is, like localities across the state and the country, implementing programs to address the Age Wave as the baby boomer generation enters retirement. According to the Pew Research Center, 10,000 people will be turning 65 every day across the country for the next 15 years, which will produce a major demographic shift. Baby boomers make up 26% of the national population, so older adults constitute a significant and growing segment of older adult library users. Memory disorders like dementia and Alzheimer's are also on the rise as the population ages. Census data shows the percentage of Baby Boomers is even higher in Henrico County than the national average.

In response to these demographic trends and with funding support from the County, Henrico County Public Library's Bookmobile has grown into a Mobile Library Service, increasing

not only visits to but also programs held in local Senior communities. From these visits, Mobile Library Services Staff members observed that increased visits were not enough: what was needed was innovative programming that both meets the needs of the growing Senior population in Henrico, and can address the increasing prevalence of memory disorders for these library patrons.

How Program Fulfilled Awards Criteria

For the Music and Memory program, the Library utilized existing partnerships, their research skills as library staff, and inexpensive materials to create an innovative new program to serve a growing segment of Henrico County's population. This is a high-impact and low-cost program that can be replicated nearly anywhere. No special funding appropriations were required to develop and host Music & Memory. The program came together through viewing an inspiring documentary, and a combination of staff passion and skill. Staff were able to develop and deliver Music & Memory while staying within existing program budgets for the Mobile Library Service.

Libraries, along with Museums, are sometimes referred to in academia as "Memory Institutions." The collections and skilled research staff in libraries connect patrons to a shared sense of culture, community, and history through access to information. Music & Memory helps Seniors and older adults access their memory, identity, and community by providing shared listening experiences. Inspired by and innovating beyond the documentary film *Alive Inside* and its exploration of the use of music in memory care, the program uses music in combination with tactile and social stimulation to engage participants. Music & Memory sparks reminiscences that build connectedness and belonging, and improve the quality of life for residents of Senior communities.

How Program Was Carried Out

Music & Memory was developed after Mobile Library Services staff members viewed a documentary titled *Alive Inside: A Story of Music and Memory* in 2014. The film chronicles a social worker's efforts to interact with older adult dementia patients through music. He finds that by playing music, even to otherwise verbally-nonresponsive adults, he can stimulate memory in those with dementia, and generate reactions ranging from smiling to singing. After listening to music from their youth, patients who had been nonverbal are transformed, suddenly possessing the ability to converse about the music they liked as a young person. One man in the film, a normally nonverbal resident of a nursing home who has advanced dementia, goes from being unable to recognize his daughter to discussing the dances of his youth and singing a perfect rendition of his favorite Cab Calloway song after listening to music. The film demonstrates that listening to music can combat memory loss and help restore a sense of self to those experiencing it.

Already working in Senior communities and nursing homes, Henrico County Public Library's Mobile Library Service staff members set out with the objective to encourage Seniors to reminisce about experiences in their lives and stimulate memory. They hoped that increasing access to memory would not only stimulate the minds and sense of self of their Senior patrons, but also inspire sharing of memories between residents of the Senior communities, creating a sense of connectedness and belonging.

The documentary film *Alive Inside* addresses severe dementia, but staff believed that a similar program would be as effective with any Seniors in specialized residences to foster a sense of community. While the documentary involved the use of iPods to play music for individuals, Henrico library staff decided to add a layer of tactile and social experience through use of vinyl records and turntables. They researched and created lists of popular musical artists of the late 1930s through the early 1960s, and used those lists to find vinyl records at local record and thrift stores. For each featured artist, they created short biographies and sourced photographic portraits

to share during the program to further stimulate memory and discussion. They purchased an inexpensive portable record player with built-in speakers to play music to the group during the program.

Henrico library staff contacted the Activities Directors at the Senior communities already visited by the Mobile Library Service to schedule the program. The Mobile Library Service visits these locations regularly throughout the year, hosting programs from author visits to book clubs, and has established long-term partnerships with these communities. The County has invested in expanding the capacity for the Library to create and maintain these partnerships by funding the Mobile Library Service, expanding its staff in 2017 to include a new Outreach Manager position, and an additional part-time Public Services Specialist.

For the Music & Memory program, Mobile Library Service staff use the collection of records, record player, staff-produced biographies, and accompanying photographs as program supplies. The program begins by simply playing music and passing around the records and covers. Seniors may be encouraged to look through the collection as well and play some of the records on the turntable themselves. The group will usually discuss and play between 14-20 artists over the course of the program which lasts approximately one hour. Staff may ask Seniors if they recognize the song and artist as a song is played, or they can show the photograph of the artist before playing a track. Staff leads discussion with Seniors about the music, asking questions about it and what it meant and means to them throughout the program. Dancing, of course, is encouraged.

The first program was hosted in September 2016 at a nursing home in Henrico County. From 2016-2018, Mobile Library Services staff has hosted the program nine times, at six Senior communities, and once at a Senior program series at the Twin Hickory Library in Henrico County. A total of 203 participants have engaged with the program. As Music & Memory grew and proved popular, staff created several playlists so that they could repeat the program more than once at a

particular location over the course of a year. Recently added is a special Holiday version of the program, featuring local recording artists and photographs from a famous local department store Tea Room; a holiday hotspot from the 1940s-60s of which many older adults have fond memories. They are now working to create a portable and bookable kit with materials from the program so that Library staff across the County can schedule and lead Music & Memory programs in their branches.

Over the course of these two years, staff leading Music & Memory programs have grown increasingly confident in leading engaging discussions with Seniors in nursing homes and other communities for older adults. Because program participants are encouraged to share their personal experiences, the program is elastic and always changing. Staff have developed their facilitation skills to flow with conversation at each session, which benefits their ability to lead other types of programs in Senior communities and beyond.

Financing and Staffing

The largest expense of the program was likely staff time, however, a large portion of Library staff time is already dedicated to program development. If a library system does not have a Mobile Library Service or Bookmobile staff to do Outreach visits, the program can be hosted in the Library: the Music & Memory program held at Henrico County's Twin Hickory Library, with 25 attendees, shows that older adults will come to the library for a program like this. Alternatively, partnerships between Libraries and Senior living communities can be established by contacting a community's activities director and scheduling a staff visit to the site. In addition, staff has found the program can be compiled into a kit with CDs/mp3s and artist biographies that can be shared across library locations in a system, as vinyl records could be difficult for some systems to procure, transport, or maintain.

Other than the cost of staff time, costs for Music & Memory break down as follows:

- Price of the turntable, record case, record cleaner and extra needles: \$120
- 35 Vinyl records from .50 to 5 dollars each: \$40 dollars.
- Printing and laminating the short biographies and photographs: \$0 (done in-house)
- **TOTAL: \$160**

Program Results

Each Music & Memory program has garnered a positive response. Attendees were excited to share stories of their own experiences as well as sing along to the songs. Many who seemed shy or non-verbal wound up not only tapping their feet and singing along, but shared very personal moments of their lives: skipping school to go see Frank Sinatra in New York, recalling listening to the Andrew Sisters on the radio, watching Rosemary Clooney on her television show, or having their dance card filled in by Elvis.

The program innovates beyond the ideas presented in the documentary *Alive Inside* by adding a social and tactile layer to the use of music in Senior and memory care, through use of records played to a group, along with photographs and discussion. The result is an engaging and immersive experience for participants.

Lisa Mullen, Activities Director of Spring Arbor of Richmond, said: "Many residents share life stories as we discuss the songs. Memories of concerts attended or seeing the artists on television help residents bond with the shared experiences of their past. We have segued into lively discussions about fashion, hair styles, and politics as we immerse ourselves into the songs."

Beth Wildermuth, Activities Director of the local Chestnut Grove facility, says of Music & Memory: "The Program is a wonderful mix of music, trivia, and laughter to entertain everyone. The residents enjoyed listening to records and reminiscing about music from the early years. One

resident had such a good time she got up and danced with [library staff] Phil and Chris. The residents loved it!”

One particularly illustrative example of the program’s impact is consistent across every session of Music & Memory. Staff end each program by playing The Weavers’ rendition of “Good Night Irene,” and every time, the whole audience sings the chorus with rousing energy. There is a point near the end of the song that gets very quiet, and participants respond in the same way in their singing. It is moving to witness persons who had previously seemed reluctant to participate in conversation suddenly able to sing and express themselves in accordance with the dynamic nature of the music.

Brief Summary

Henrico County is, like localities across the state and the country, implementing programs to address the Age Wave as the baby boomer generation enters retirement. Memory disorders like dementia and Alzheimer’s are also on the rise as the population ages. Inspired by the documentary film *Alive Inside* and their work in Senior communities across the County, Henrico County Public Library staff members combined a love of music and passion for serving the aging to create the Music & Memory program.

Music & Memory seeks to spark opportunities for older adults to connect to the past and others using popular music of their youth. Already passionate about music and skilled in research, staff from Henrico County’s Mobile Library Services purchased vinyl records of artists from the 1930s-50s, and researched and compiled artist biographies, to play for and inspire discussions with residents of local Senior communities. The program has received positive feedback from Seniors and Activities Directors of Senior communities, that it successfully opens a dialogue between Seniors and their peers about their past and what music means and has meant to them.

It is a high-impact and low-cost program that could be replicated easily across the state, and scaled to fit the means and needs of any library or community.

Music & Memory stimulates deep memory in older adults, opening up their ability to communicate. The program gives participants not just a window to the past, but a bridge from the past to the present, and from the individual to the social, that allows them to share their memories and identities with others in a meaningful way. Music & Memory helps older adults to find their voice, and a place in their community, through listening.