“In an effort to raise awareness, educate our community and assist families who have been touched by Alzheimer’s disease, this month’s article will discuss how music can calm, uplift moods and engage a person with Alzheimer’s disease. In his book “Musicophilia: Tales of Music & the Brain,” neurologist Oliver Sacks wrote, “People with Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias can respond to music when nothing else reaches them—musical memory somehow survives the ravages of disease, even in people with advanced dementia, music can often reawaken personal memories and associations that are otherwise lost.”

Here are some tips and ideas in using music in caring for someone with Alzheimer’s disease or other forms of dementia.

• Select music from the individual’s young adult years 18 to 25—listening to old favorites can enhance mood and make potentially troublesome daily living activities such as bathing or dressing go more smoothly for all involved.

• Be creative and personal. Find the specific songs that were special to the person you care for and awaken their interest and attention. Play songs that have some importance to them.

• Choose soft classical music, lullabies or non-rhythmic instrumental background music to reduce agitation and anxiety during periods of sundowning (Symptom of Alzheimer’s disease and other forms of dementia. Confusion and agitation worsen in the late afternoon and evening, or as the sun goes down. Symptoms are less pronounced earlier in the day).

• To create a sense of comfort and safety as well as engagement, look for classic American folk songs with easy to remember lyrics that most of us learned as children, think “She’ll Be Comin’ Round the Mountain” and “I’ve Been Working on the Railroad.”

• Individuals with Alzheimer’s disease vary in their response to music depending on which stage of the disease they’re experiencing, but it can also change from day to day. What music should you play for the person you care for? Bottom line—whatever works. ‘Music is the strongest form of magic.’ – Marilyn Manson.”
Music, Art and Alzheimer’s

Music can be powerful. Studies have shown music may reduce agitation and improve behavioral issues that are common in the middle-stages of the disease. Even in the late-stages of Alzheimer's, a person may be able to tap a beat or sing lyrics to a song from childhood. Music provides a way to connect, even after verbal communication has become difficult.

Use these tips when selecting music for a person with dementia:

• Identify music that’s familiar and enjoyable to the person. If possible, let the person choose the music.
• Choose a source of music that isn't interrupted by commercials, which can cause confusion.
• Use music to create the mood you want. For example, a tranquil piece of music can help create a calm environment, while a faster paced song from someone's childhood may boost spirit and evoke happy memories.
• Encourage movement (clapping, dancing) to add to the enjoyment.
• Avoid sensory overload; eliminate competing noises by shutting windows and doors and by turning off the television. Make sure the volume of the music is not too loud.

Art projects can create a sense of accomplishment and purpose. They can provide the person with dementia — as well as caregivers — an opportunity for self-expression.

When planning an art activity for someone with middle- to late-stage Alzheimer's, keep these tips in mind:

• Keep the project on an adult level. Avoid anything that might be demeaning or seem child-like.
• Build conversation into the project. Provide encouragement, discuss what the person is creating or reminiscence.
• Help the person begin the activity. If the person is painting, you may need to start the brush movement. Most other projects should only require basic instruction and assistance.
• Use safe materials. Avoid toxic substances and sharp tools.
• Allow plenty of time, keeping in mind that the person doesn’t have to finish the project in one sitting.

Taken from the Alzheimer’s Association website https://www.alz.org/care/alzheimers-dementia-music-art-therapy.asp
Activities at Home

Activities are the daily things we all do at home on a regular basis; for example, getting dressed, do chores, paying bills, etc. For a person with dementia, these daily activities will eventually need a caregiver’s assistance. However, planned activities for a person with dementia can help enhance the person’s sense of dignity and self-esteem in the later states of the disease by giving the person more meaning and purpose to his or her life.

Some types of activities for daily routines include:
- **Chores:** Dusting, sweeping, doing laundry
- **Mealtime:** Preparing food, cooking, eating
- **Personal care:** Bathing, shaving, getting dressed

Other activities include:
- **Creative:** Painting, playing the piano
- **Intellectual:** Reading a book, doing crossword puzzles
- **Physical:** Taking a walk, playing catch
- **Social:** Having coffee, talking, playing cards
- **Spiritual:** Praying, singing a hymn
- **Spontaneous:** Going out to dinner, visiting friends
- **Work-related:** Making notes, typing, fixing something

Planning activities

While planning activities for a person with dementia, focus on the person, activity, approach and place.

- **Person:** Consider the person's likes and dislikes, strengths and abilities, and interests. As the disease progresses, keep activities flexible and be ready to make adjustments.
- **Keep the person's skills and abilities in mind:** Stick with activities the person has always enjoyed and adjust, as needed, to match the person's current abilities.
- **Pay special attention to what the person enjoys:** Take note when the person seems happy, anxious, distracted or irritable. Some people enjoy watching sports, while others may be frightened by the fast pace or noise.
- **Consider whether the person begins activities without direction:** Does he or she set the table before dinner or sweep the kitchen floor mid-morning? If so, you may wish to plan these activities as part of the daily routine.
- **Be aware of physical problems:** Does he or she get tired quickly or have difficulty seeing, hearing or performing simple movements? If so, you may want to avoid certain activities.

Activity

- **Focus on enjoyment, not achievement:** Find activities that build on remaining skills and talents. A professional artist might become frustrated over the declining quality of work, but an amateur might enjoy a new opportunity for self-expression.
- **Encourage involvement in daily life:** Activities that help the individual feel like a valued part of the household — like setting the table, wiping counter tops or emptying wastebaskets — can provide a sense of success and accomplishment.
- **Relate activity to work life:** A former office worker might enjoy activities that involve organizing, like putting coins in a holder, helping to assemble a mailing or making a to-do list. A farmer or gardener may take pleasure in working in the yard.
- **Look for favorites:** The person who always enjoyed drinking coffee and reading the newspaper may still find these activities enjoyable, even if he or she is no longer able to completely understand what the newspaper says.
• **Change activities as needed**: Try to be flexible and acknowledge the person's changing interests and abilities.

• **Consider time of day**: Caregivers may find they have more success with certain activities at specific times of day, such as bathing and dressing in the morning. Keep in mind that your typical daily routine may need to change somewhat.

• **Adjust activities to disease stages**: As the disease progresses, you may want to introduce more repetitive tasks. Be prepared for the person to eventually take a less active role in activities.

**Approach**

• **Offer support and supervision**: You may need to show the person how to perform the activity and provide simple, step-by-step directions.

• **Concentrate on the process, not the result**: Does it matter if the towels are folded properly? Not really. What matters is that you were able to spend time together, and the person feels as if he or she has done something useful.

• **Be flexible**: When the person insists that he or she doesn't want to do something, it may be because he or she is unable or afraid. Don't force it. If the person insists on doing something a different way, let it happen and change it later if necessary.

• **Be realistic and relaxed**: Don't be concerned about filling every minute of the day with an activity. The person with Alzheimer's needs a balance of activity and rest, and may need more frequent breaks and varied tasks.

• **Help get the activity started**: Most people with dementia still have the energy and desire to do things but may lack the ability to organize, plan, initiate and successfully complete the task.

• **Break activities into simple, easy-to-follow steps**: Focus on one task at a time. Too many directions at once can be overwhelming.

• **Assist with difficult parts of the task**: If you're cooking and the person can't measure the ingredients, finish the measuring and encourage a different task, such as: “Would you please stir this for me?”

• **Let the individual know he or she is needed**: Ask, “Could you please help me?” Be careful, however, not to place too many demands on the person.

• **Make the connection**: If you ask the person to make a card, he or she may not respond. But if you say that you're sending a special get-well card to a friend and invite him or her to join you, the person may enjoy working on the task.

• **Don't criticize or correct the person**: If the person enjoys a harmless activity, even if it seems insignificant or meaningless to you, encourage the person to continue.

• **Encourage self-expression**: Include activities that allow the person a chance for expression. These types of activities could include painting, drawing, music or conversation.

• **Involve the person through conversation**: While you're polishing shoes, washing the car or cooking dinner, talk to the person about what you're doing. Even if the person cannot respond, he or she is likely to benefit from your communication.

• **Substitute an activity for a behavior**: If a person with dementia rubs his or her hand on a table, put a cloth in his or her hand and encourage the person to wipe the table. Or, if the person is moving his or her feet on the floor, play some music so he or she can tap them to the beat.

• **Try again later**: If something isn't working, it may just be the wrong time of day or the activity may be too complicated. Try again later or adapt the activity.

Taken from the Alzheimer's Association website https://www.alz.org/national/documents/brochure_activities.pdf
Taking Action:

Minnesota now has 43 “Dementia Friendly” communities throughout the state. Ten new communities have received a grant to support “Dementia Friendly” efforts. These ten new communities include Arlington, Ely, Granite Falls, Litchfield, Pine City, Sartell, Anoka, Chanhassen, Duluth, and West African Community in Brooklyn Center.

Re-Membering Matters at Mille Lacs is currently working on training area businesses to become a Dementia Friendly business. Area businesses that have received the training for staff are Thompson Lake Country Drug, Scandia House-Isle, Wahkon Inn, and the kitchen staff in each Assisted Living Units in all of Mille Lacs Band districts.

Re-Membering Matters at Mille Lacs has distributed its area resource brochure along with Alzheimer’s Association brochures to Thompson Lake Country Drug, Mille Lacs Lake Community Library, Wahkon City Hall, Onamia Drug Store and Onamia Depot Library. Kathy will also bring brochures to the Operation Community Connect (OCC) event on June 6th from 10-2 pm at Onamia Elementary Gym.

Isle Evangelical Free Church plans to hold a Music and Memory program to “benefit people suffering with Alzheimer’s by increasing awareness, cognition and engagement; reducing agitation, anxiety and behaviors; and providing pain reduction and improved speech.” taken from Elim Care Flyer Watch for details.

Upcoming fundraising events to raise money to help fight Alzheimer’s will be June 20th, The Longest Day, and September 24th, Walk to End Alzheimer’s. If you are interesting in either of these events go to www.alz.org for more details to form a team.

Upcoming Events:

Action Team meeting: July 19th 1:00 pm @ the ROC in Onamia

ACT on Alzheimer’s Dementia Friendly Learning Summit June 13, 2016 Minnesota Landscape Arboretum

The Longest Day June 20, 2016
What will you do to fight Alzheimer’s?
The Longest Day is a team event to raise funds and awareness for the Alzheimer’s Association. For more information go to www.alz.org

Walk to End Alzheimer’s September 24, 2016 Baxter, MN www.alz.org

Getting Connected:

ACT on Alzheimer’s http://www.actonalz.org/

ACT on Alzheimer’s/ Mille Lacs http://www.actonalz.org/mille_lacs

Alzheimer’s Association http://www.alz.org

Re-Membering Matters at Mille Lacs Facebook Page www.facebook.com/remembering mattersatmillelacs