

Music2LINK

Midterm Update



Music2LINK is an intergenerational music and art-based project which provides stimulating experiences and opportunities for people living with dementia (PLWD) and their care partners. The goal of the program is to increase engagement and present moment orientation, and for PLWD to experience an improved quality of life. A secondary goal is to develop youth understanding of and comfort with dementia and personal connection by providing knowledge and experiences with seniors who have dementia. A third goal is for care partners to gain support and knowledge and to learn how to create meaningful and positive interactions with their loved one.

Music2LINK aims to provide engaging and meaningful experiences for PLWD in care centres and in local and provincial communities while providing support and information to care partners. During programming sessions, PLWD get to experience increased engagement and entertainment through music and art activities. Care partners participate in a fun and engaging activity with their loved one while learning more about dementia, including how to engage and interact with their loved one in an enjoyable way.

The program coordinator was able to facilitate four in-person intergenerational music and art sessions and two care partner nights prior to the pandemic. The program was well received by care partners, youth, and seniors in different stages of dementia.

Due to the isolation required by the pandemic, it was not possible to reach PLWD and their care partners in care centres. To adapt, the program coordinator shifted the focus solely to PLWD in their own homes and their care partners. Despite the pandemic, we have been able to build new community connections and raise awareness of the Music2LINK program throughout Calgary.

Virtual conversations were facilitated with care partners regarding their shared struggles and barriers while providing resources and strategies to assist in their daily care. Many PLWD and their care partners have expressed a lack of fit for virtual programming. "Screen time" is difficult for people living with dementia to engage in, and so we will focus on in-person programming once it is safe to do so.



New recruitment documents and content were created to send out, to increase awareness of the Music2LINK program. The program coordinator networked with faith communities, the Alzheimer's Society, Age-Friendly Calgary, Dementia Network Calgary, etc., to raise awareness for care partners who could benefit from Music2LINK.

Although in-person intergenerational and virtual programming had to be postponed, the Music2LINK program developed substantially in other areas. New community partnerships have been made to better serve families living with dementia. Evaluation methods have been improved, a program manual draft is complete, and additional dementia-friendly activities have been created. Successes have been possible due to networking and collaborating with professors from the University of Calgary, local art therapists, and other program coordinators at LINKages.

Collaboration and community building has been a primary focus of the Music2LINK program throughout the pandemic. The Music2LINK coordinator has built a connection with a professor at the University of Calgary to explore having a practicum student assist LINKages with evaluation – specifically including the voices and lived experiences of PLWD participating in this project. Community partners have been, and will continue to be, critical to the success of the project, as the pandemic impacted our ability to connect directly with PLWD.

Although virtual programming was not a good fit for PLWD or care partners due to increased Covid demands, the connections made became the groundwork for Music2LINK to commence its community program. Communities such as the Hillhurst Sunnyside Community Association continue to engage to create in-person programming for local community members caring for a PLWD when it is safe to do so.

The next phase of the Music2LINK program will focus on a safe return to in-person programming in care centres and community, and expansion into rural Alberta through LINKages existing RuraLINK sites. Both Music2LINK and RuraLINK have a presence on the Collaborative Online Resources & Education (CORE) platform and this accessible provincial platform can be leveraged to launch the Music2LINK program in rural sites.

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