



TO ALL THOSE WHO WISH TO MAKE A SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE IN THEIR LIVES AND THE LIVES OF OTHERS:

The ***Sing for Life*** program with Deb Saville and Martin Meader was an opportunity to experience how music can be used as a therapeutic medium to awaken the hidden and seemingly forgotten thoughts, events, skills, actions, feelings and emotions of our clients, families and staff. ***Sing for Life*** is more than just singing. It is a unique combination of experiential learning and motivational activities that together form a meaningful and rich experience that addresses the physical, cognitive, social and emotional functioning of all involved.

Using their extensive knowledge and experience, Deb and Martin create a safe space for clients to reconnect with their past and with others using music. The activities selected are adjusted to the skill set and ability level of the individual clients, and parallel the level of comfort within the group. There are also activities and strategies targeted at staff and families such as how to maintain a balanced lifestyle and reduce stress. Everything is highly interactive and engaging.

Through their carefully tailored program, Deb and Martin challenged some of the typical thinking associated with older adults and people with dementia by demonstrating and encouraging 'possibility thinking' – that there is no limit in what a person can do, despite their diagnosis. This was particularly evident during the relaxation sessions, where clients were still, quiet and at peace for up to fifteen minutes! Furthermore, clients grew both individually and as a group. For example, during our concert, two of our clients performed solos. Clients initiated conversations with each other and joked and laughed. Staff also benefitted by working together; teamwork prospered.

Throughout the process, Deb and Martin demonstrated professionalism by:

- Communicating with clarity at all times
- Managing boundaries with flexibility and openness
- Diagnosing issues and helping to find solutions
- Following a structured, well designed process
- Demonstrating infectious passion and enthusiasm
- Assisting wherever and whenever necessary to make sure the clients and staff were fully engaged in the program

As a result, the benefits to those who participated include:

- Developing a sense of belonging and inclusion through meaningful connections
- Feelings of safety and comfort that permitted the clients to openly express themselves and share past events and experiences of meaning, including those involving grief and loss (e.g. the war, loss of husband/wife)
- Maintaining a sense of identity by reconnecting with past skills and abilities (e.g. dancing or playing an instrument)

Southern Cross Care. A community service initiative of the Knights of the Southern Cross (WA).

Central Office
15 Rowe Avenue
Rivervale
Western Australia 6103

Correspondence
Southern Cross Care (WA) Inc.
PO Box 76 Burswood
Western Australia 6100

Telephone 1300 669 189
Fax 08 9282 9999
Email info@scrosswa.org.au
www.scrosswa.org.au



- Sharing love and physical closeness (e.g. massage, dancing, hugs, eye contact)
- Being able to experience success and sense of achievement from participating in a purposeful activity (e.g. learning new songs)
- An increase in mood and reduced stress and agitation to enable a sense of calmness and relaxation evidenced by reduced behaviours of concern such as wandering or aggression

Some of the comments collected from family members include:

"My dad is so alive here – I have never seen him this way - I never knew he could dance!"

"My husband is so comfortable here. It is marvelous to see how he responds to this program, he is a different person."

We strongly recommend Deb and Martin's programs to anyone who has a desire to step outside their comfort zone, exceed expectations, and ignite their clients' and staffs' spirit.

Truly inspirational and life changing!

Yours faithfully,

Margaret Melose
Learning and Development

Elizabeth Oliver
Occupational Therapy Consultant

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