Music and Socialization: Regaining Dignity and Rediscovering Purpose in Life
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Our Mission
To share the healing power of music to improve the lives of patients with neurocognitive decline and the lives of their families.

Our Vision
MusicMendsMinds (MMM) fosters the development of musical bands comprised of elderly musicians and singers affected by neurodegenerative diseases, including Alzheimer’s, Parkinson’s, and other related forms of dementia. Ideally, these unique bands also include young music students to create a joyful alternative to social isolation by bringing together musicians, singers, students, caregivers, and friends to make music, build connections, and promote aging in place in their home.

Science Behind Our Approach
Music Memories
Music memories seem to be stored and accessed differently than our "declarative" memories; they have a powerful emotional component. Therefore, even individuals with cognitive and memory deficits, find their musical memories are intact.

Socialization and Intergenerational Support
Socializing with others is a critical component of maintaining cognitive health, improving mood and increasing feelings of wellbeing among the elderly. Regularly scheduled rehearsals with the involvement of younger musicians stimulates senior members, who view themselves as mentors and role models. This interaction increases self-esteem and feelings and generativity.

Playing an Instrument: Full Brain Workout
Playing an instrument engages sensory, motor, auditory, visual and cognitive centers. Simultaneously, it releases dopamine, which is involved in learning, movement control and mood. By engaging multiple brain circuits, with a focus on skill improvement and collaboration with other musicians, we believe that the circuitry in the brain can be maintained, rescued or rewired.

Outcomes: Media Coverage and Replication
Media Coverage
The 5th Dementia has demonstrated benefits for individual and community health in psychosocial, spiritual, and artistic domains that can be seen by the improved mood, emotional affect, and energy levels from the participating seniors. This has allowed MusicMendsMinds, Inc to receive nationwide coverage from PBS, The Michael J. Fox Foundation, and The Jewish Journal, in addition to local coverage from CBS and the Los Angeles Jazz Society.

Replication
Six new bands have already formed in California, Texas and Washington State; and we have been in close conversation with the Michael J. Fox Foundation, the Colburn School of Music, California State University, Northridge, (CSUN) and the Veterans Affairs Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System.

Founding Band Model
The 5th Dementia
The first band in West LA has developed collaborative partnerships with a local school (Windward School), university health system (UCLA Health System), and community centers (Brentwood Presbyterian Church and InsightLA). The band hosts bi-weekly rehearsals and seasonal concerts that encourage the older adults to engage in lifelong learning opportunities with the students.

Health Service Implications
Caregiver Support and Cost-Savings
According to the Alzheimer’s Association, unpaid care from friends and family members is valued at 217.7 billion dollars. However, nearly 60% of these caregivers experience high emotional stress and 40% suffer depression. The concerts and rehearsals help improve health outcomes for all; caregivers experience joy, hope, and relief as they witness their loved one’s reduced symptoms, elevated mood, and newfound ability to express themselves.

Band Kit
Replication kits are available for those interested in creating a therapeutic intergenerational band in their community.

Ted-Education: How Playing an Instrument Benefits Your Brain
By: Anita Collins

Alive Inside by Michael Rossato-Bennett
Social Worker Dan Cohen, founder of the nonprofit organization Music & Memory, fights against a broken healthcare system to demonstrate music’s ability to combat memory loss and restore a deep sense of self to those suffering from it.

References

Contact
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Visit our website at www.musicmendsminds.org