

Melody Lane: Music Companionship Visits

Research Summary

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In 2018, 29% of older adults surveyed in Larimer County reported “feeling lonely or isolated”.¹ Then in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, people were asked to self-isolate, decreasing social connection. Social isolation and loneliness are recognized as public health risks that negatively impact health and well-being.² Engagement with music (listening, singing, and dancing) has been shown to reduce loneliness, influence mood, and increase feelings of social connection.³ Across cultures and social-economic levels, music and engagement in music brings people together.

¹ CASOA Survey, 2018; ² NASEM, 2020; ³ Levetin, 2020

About the Melody Lane Project

The Melody Lane project was created through a collaboration between the Volunteers of America Caring Companions program and researchers at CSU. The purpose of the project was to examine the feasibility of volunteer-led music companionship visits with community-dwelling older adults. It was hoped that music companionship visits could benefit the volunteers as well as the community-dwelling older adults and improve connection between the two individuals. Initially, visits were done virtually. The project then pivoted to be delivered in person following local health guidelines.

Melody Lane Core Principles

- Individualization of music
- Multiple ways to engage with music
- Volunteer autonomy



Community Partner



Project Funding

Partially funded through grants from the **Engagement Scholarship Consortium** and **Colorado State University**

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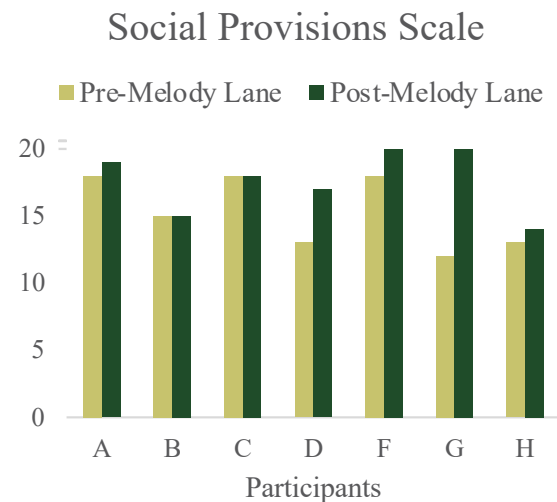
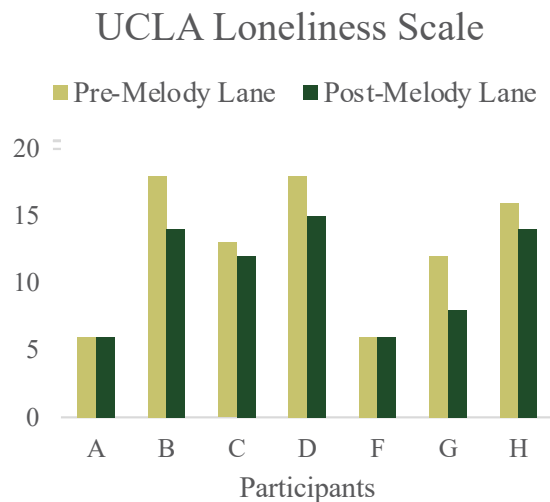
**SCHOOL OF MUSIC,
THEATRE, AND DANCE**
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

Project Outcomes

Music companionship visits were acceptable to both volunteers and participants.

Eight volunteer-participant dyads from the Caring Companion Program participated in the Melody Lane project and completed between four and six music companionship visits. The average length of music companionship visits was 56 minutes and both volunteers and participants expressed interest in including music in future companionship visits.

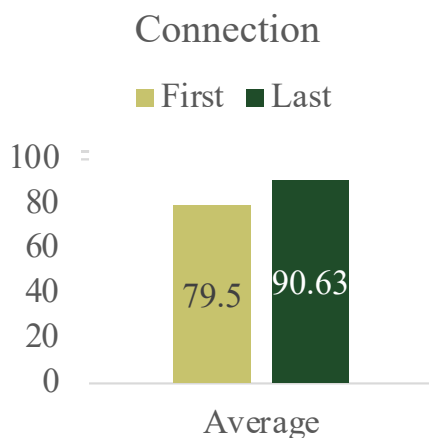
Perceived loneliness and social support of participants improved.



We have observed a general trend of improvement across both the perceived loneliness and availability of social support measures. This suggests that the participants' perceived loneliness decreased, and social support was viewed as being more available.

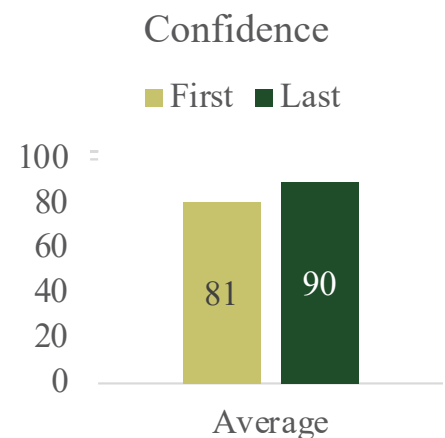
Volunteers reported increased connection and confidence.

Volunteers reported increased connection with their matched community members and increased confidence in leading music activities from the first to the final music companionship visit.



“This was the **opening of a relationship**. Music did that without being uncomfortable.”

Volunteer



Project Outcomes

Music visits were enjoyable for the volunteer, participant, and care partner.

Music activities were enjoyable for volunteers and their matched participants. Volunteers and participants enjoyed learning more about each song as well as each other. In addition, care partners shared that interactions during music were enjoyable.

Participants and volunteers reported liking different types of music activities (listening, singing, moving), and some music visits expanded to include additional songs and music videos.

“It’s always enjoyable to go back and reminisce and remember and think about all the good times”

Participant

[T]he music and sharing thoughts about the music is providing different ways for us to get acquainted.”

Volunteer

Music was something new that provided a structure for interactions.

Volunteers reported that music was present in few companionship visits prior to Melody Lane. Music was a novel stimulus that provided new ways to interact and engage with each other. When in-person visits were not possible, virtual music visits provided longer and richer interactions compared with brief phone calls.

“it gave us something to talk about...brought us all together to explore something new and different.”

Care Partner

Some participants and care partners rediscovered the personal importance of music.

At the start of the project, few participants reported regularly listening to music. The Melody Lane project served as a reminder of how music could be used in daily life, and some participants began listening to music in between companionship visits.

“[When] I want to hear some old - oldies that I love, I just throw [headphones] on. And it’s - it is great. I love it.”

Participant

“I just hope you continue it because there are a lot of people like me who live alone, who have forgotten.... You kind of help[ed] me find some joy.”

Participant

What’s Next?

The initial study of Melody Lane is complete. We are continuing to work with the Caring Companion Program to support volunteers in including music in companionship visits. Early results show that music companionship visits may be beneficial to volunteers and participants, and while in-person visits were preferred, virtual visits may be an option when in-person visits are not possible. These outcomes are being shared at professional conferences, and we plan on submitting a paper for publication. We are encouraged by the initial trends observed in the Melody Lane project, and we hope to study music companionship visits on a larger scale.