



a new **dementia-friendly** chorus!

Chorus

INTRODUCTION

Melodies in Mind will be a chorus for people living with dementia and their care partners. Through regular rehearsals and performances, our goal is to dispel stigmas surrounding dementia while providing an enjoyable and creative outlet. It is based on the successful work of Giving Voice Chorus which has nurtured many such groups around the country. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h0zBourGES0>)

BACKGROUND

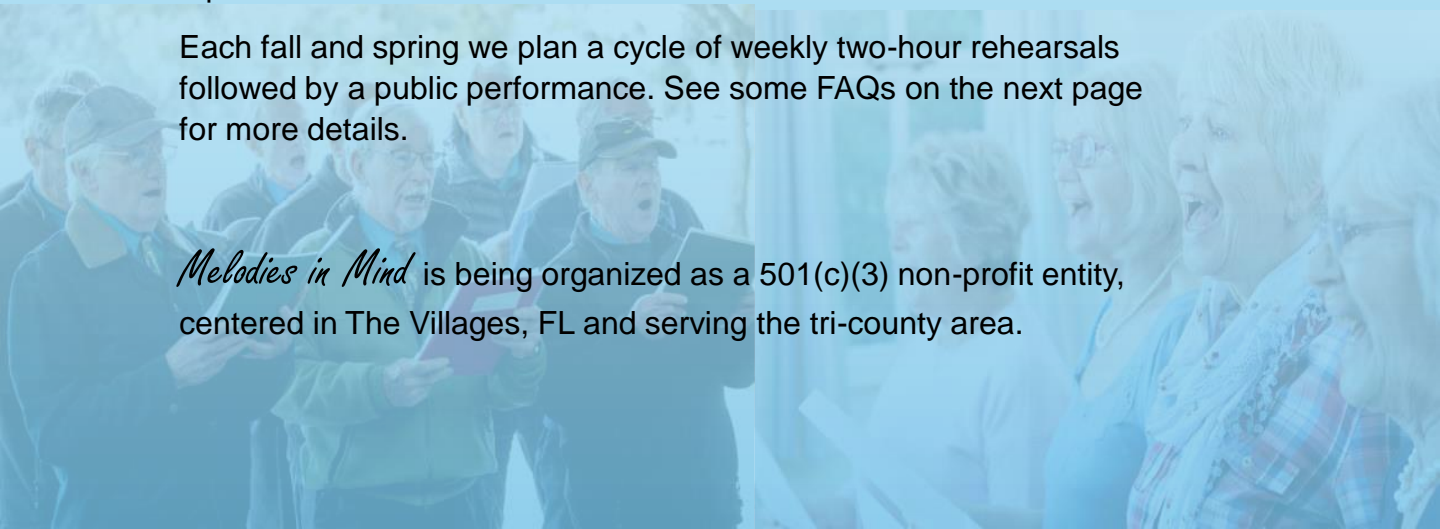
One of the group's founders has Alzheimer's but his musical skills are undiminished and he wants to stay engaged in music. When we discovered the Giving Voice initiative we learned that music making is not only possible for people with dementia, it's among the most long-lasting abilities.

HOW IT WORKS

Melodies in Mind will consist of those with dementia, their care partners and volunteer singers from other local vocal groups, led by an experienced music director and accompanist. We will also have a professional health advisor.

Each fall and spring we plan a cycle of weekly two-hour rehearsals followed by a public performance. See some FAQs on the next page for more details.

Melodies in Mind is being organized as a 501(c)(3) non-profit entity, centered in The Villages, FL and serving the tri-county area.



Some Frequently Asked Questions and Answers!

How will the program work?

- The person with dementia (the chorus member) and caregiver register for the program as a “Pair”, and both attend the rehearsals. (If the caregiver can also sing, all the better but not required.) Each Pair is assisted by a volunteer singer from other vocal groups in the region.
- We’ll sing old and new songs while sharing musical moments together. There’s no pressure to perform, and ‘mistakes’ are not only permissible, they’re welcomed! (That’s what rehearsals are all about.)
- Sheet music folders will be available for all, as well as “words only” versions.
- Refreshments and socializing time will be included, too.
- The venue will be the Fellowship Hall at North Lake Presbyterian church (near US441 and Rolling Acres).

What is the schedule for the summer sessions?

- We’ll meet each Thursday, from 9:30 to 11:00 a.m., beginning June 19 and ending August 7. (We may skip July 3.)
- The sessions this summer will be limited to around eight Pairs or participants, making it easier for us to exchange thoughts and ideas about the program.

Must I have a musical background?

While *Melodies in Mind* is ideal for those with prior music group experience, vocal or instrumental, if you can simply carry a tune and enjoy singing with others, you’ll fit right in! We even provide “lyrics only” copies in addition to traditional sheet music.

Is there a fee for participating?

For the summer session, no. For the main seasons – fall and spring – we may ask for a small contribution, but we want *Melodies in Mind* to always be accessible at the least possible cost.

Must the caregiver attend the full rehearsal, too?

Yes. Experience has shown that the 'Pair' approach (person with dementia plus caregiver) yields the most enjoyable and productive results for all. Also, the caregiver remains fully responsible for the care, safety and other non-musical needs during the rehearsals.

Must we sign up for the entire series, or can we just come now and then?

As the regular fall and spring seasons culminate with a public performance, participation in all the rehearsals is desirable once you've enrolled. For the summer session, while it's more informal as there is no performance planned, you should still plan to attend all rehearsals if possible.

Is *Melodies in Mind* a music therapy program?

No. Music therapy is the clinical and evidence based use of music interventions to accomplish individualized goals within a therapeutic relationship by a credentialed professional who has completed an approved music therapy program. So while singing with us may be 'therapeutic', it's not music therapy.

How long are the rehearsals? And what happens during the rehearsals?

The sessions last 1 ½ hours, which includes a socializing break with refreshments. During the rehearsal itself, we'll also take some 'stretch' breaks. (The bathrooms are always available.)

If on any given day you feel that you need to leave, that's okay! If all you can do one day is hum along or listen, that's okay, too

Who else participates, besides the people with dementia and their caregivers?

In addition to the music director and accompanist, we invite volunteer singers from other vocal groups in the area (church choirs, The Villages choral groups, etc.). Besides lending their voices to the chorus, they assist the participants with dementia with musical issues like page turning, finding the place in the song, or just exchanging smiles.

Do I have to memorize music?

No. Chorus participants will receive binders with lyrics and other adaptations as needed and will use them in rehearsals and public performances

Is an audition required? Do I have to read music? Do I need a trained voice?

No, no, and no. The only requirement is that you can sing in tune, that you're willing to practice a bit, and that you're ready to have fun singing with others!

What if I love to sing but am afraid of making a mistake with a group?

Then welcome to the club! Even the 'pros' make mistakes (which is why we have rehearsals rather than just sing-a-longs). Actually, we don't think of them as mistakes: they're opportunities for improvement!

Are there 'homework' assignments?

For the regular seasons, we plan to provide practice CD's which will enable you to practice a bit and keep fresh between rehearsals. (But there are no tests!)

What's in this for the caregiver or partner?

While not a respite program, providing a positive and joyful experience that people with dementia and their care partners can enjoy together is a key objective of *Melodies in Mind*. And each care partner is warmly welcome to participate as a singer, too!

Where can I see and hear the program in action?

Our inspiration and mentor is the Giving Voice initiative that for 15 years has nurtured many choruses around the world. Here's the story:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AszNeg9JJok&t=9s>

Where can I get further information?

Contact one of the founders:

- Frank Kelly: frankjkelly@gmail.com
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- Maria Kelly: mariabk59@gmail.com