

SINGING BY HEART

Belonging Together/Programs

FOCUS	☒ Internal ☒ External
VOLUNTEER BASE	☒ General corps membership ☒ External volunteers ☒ Youth ☒ Music sections ☐ Women's ministries ☒ Seniors' ministries ☐ Social mission
TARGET POPULATION	☒ Seniors ☐ Youth ☒ People with disabilities ☒ Caregivers ☐ New Canadians ☒ Social mission ☐ Parents of babies and toddlers

Program description:

Singing by Heart is a music-based community program designed for individuals living with dementia and their care partners. Through familiar songs, hymns, conversation and shared experiences, participants are invited into a welcoming environment where connection, belonging and joy can flourish.

Drawing on research demonstrating the positive impact of music on memory, mood and social engagement, Singing by Heart creates opportunities for meaningful interaction while reducing isolation for both participants and caregivers. Sessions typically include singing, reflection, light movement, fellowship and refreshments in a supportive, dementia-friendly setting.

The program recognizes that while memory may fade, the ability to connect through music often remains. Singing by Heart offers a practical expression of Christ's love by creating spaces where every person is valued, included and able to participate.

What are the intended program outcomes?

Goals include:

- To reduce feelings of isolation and loneliness among individuals living with dementia and their caregivers.
- To foster meaningful social connections through shared musical experiences.
- To support caregiver well-being by providing opportunities for fellowship and encouragement.
- To create a welcoming environment where participants experience dignity, belonging and purpose.
- To engage corps members and volunteers in relational ministry within their community.
- To provide opportunities for spiritual encouragement through music, prayer and fellowship.



How will these outcomes be evaluated?

- Collecting participant and caregiver feedback through informal conversations or simple surveys.
- Gathering observations from volunteers regarding participant engagement and interaction.
- Tracking attendance and repeat participation over time.
- Monitoring growth in volunteer involvement and community partnerships.
- Recording participant stories and testimonials that demonstrate social, emotional or spiritual impact.

What procedures are required to set up this program?

- Identify a suitable meeting space that is accessible, welcoming and dementia-friendly.
- Recruit and train volunteers to support participants and caregivers during sessions.
- Complete required ministry worker screening processes where applicable.
- Register and train leaders and supporting volunteers through Singing by Heart training provided by The Salvation Army.
- Obtain Singing by Heart songbooks and supporting program resources.
- Establish partnerships with local Alzheimer Societies, seniors' organizations, community agencies and healthcare providers for referrals and promotion.
- Develop a regular program schedule and communication plan for participants and caregivers.
- Prepare refreshments and fellowship opportunities as appropriate.

What procedure is required to operate this program?

- Welcome participants and caregivers and provide a supportive atmosphere.
- Set up seating in a circle or semi-circle to encourage interaction and connection.
- Lead songs using the Singing by Heart songbook and accompanying resources.
- Facilitate conversation, reminiscence and participation throughout the session.
- Offer spiritual care elements such as prayer, Scripture readings or reflections where appropriate.
- Provide refreshments and opportunities for fellowship.
- Monitor participant needs and adapt activities to ensure inclusion and comfort.
- Debrief with volunteers following sessions to share observations and identify opportunities for improvement.

Are there financial costs attached to providing this program?

Minimal to moderate costs may include:

- Printing of Singing by Heart songbooks and program materials.
- Printing of promotional materials and participant resources.
- Refreshments for participants and caregivers.
- Musical accompaniment resources or equipment.
- Volunteer training and appreciation costs.

What physical resources will I require?

- Singing by Heart songbooks and leader resources.
- Piano, keyboard or other musical accompaniment.
- Comfortable seating arranged to encourage participation.
- Name tags for participants and volunteers.
- Refreshment supplies and serving materials.
- Accessible washroom facilities and barrier-free meeting space.

Would any additional training be necessary for volunteers with this program?

Volunteers should complete The Salvation Army ministry worker screening process where required.

All program leaders and volunteers should complete Singing by Heart training, including dementia awareness education and guidance on creating inclusive, supportive environments for individuals living with dementia and their caregivers.

For more information:

For additional guidance, resources or support in planning your program, visit

www.salvationist.ca/sbh

Or please contact the Music and Arts Ministries team and Community Mission Department at territorial headquarters..