

## NEWS

## Workshop demonstrates the power of sound on the mind



Attendees participate in a singalong during an Alzheimer's Orange County Music for the Mind class held at the OASIS Senior Center in Newport Beach on July 17. (Susan Hoffman)

**By Susan Hoffman**

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“How many of you would go to the moon today?”

The question was posed to an audience gathered at the OASIS Senior Center last week by Karen Skipper, a music therapist who was there to lead a brain-stimulating social engagement workshop hosted by [Alzheimer's Orange County](#) as part of its Connect2Culture program.

About half of the 40 adults in the room raised their hands in response to her query.

A few minutes later, Skipper asked the group to name a song with the word “moon” in it. Soon the words to “Fly Me to the Moon” appeared on a screen and attendees joined in a singalong of the jazz standard that became associated with the Apollo moon missions after Frank Sinatra recorded it in 1964.



About 40 people attended the Music for the Mind class held in Newport Beach, including some who are living with Alzheimer's. (Susan Hoffman)

The space-themed class was an interactive experience that combined music and historical facts. As Skipper explained when the Music for the Mind session was getting underway, everyone was there to use “every single part” of their brains.

Attendees were posed trivia questions related to space, including which U.S. president started the space program (John F. Kennedy), the name of the first person to walk on the moon (Neil Armstrong) and who was the oldest person to go into space (90-year-old actor William Shatner), among others.



The combination of trivia quizzes paired with music about stars, comets and planets continued for the next hour as Skipper strummed her guitar and encouraged attendees to sing along.



Attendees raise their hands to respond to questions posed during the Music for the Mind class. (Susan Hoffman)

“Music is such a great inroad for people with memory impairment,” said Kim Bailey, program and education specialist with Alzheimer’s Orange County, adding that dance and art also elicit responses in Alzheimer’s patients, especially those in later stages who rely on non-verbal communication.

Bailey said the class was comprised of OASIS clients as well as some seniors who are living with Alzheimer’s.

“All seniors are interested in brain stimulation classes,” said Bailey. “They are helpful for everyone, including those without Alzheimers.”



Two women who had not previously met join hands to dance during the Alzheimer's O.C. Music for the Mind class. (Susan Hoffman)

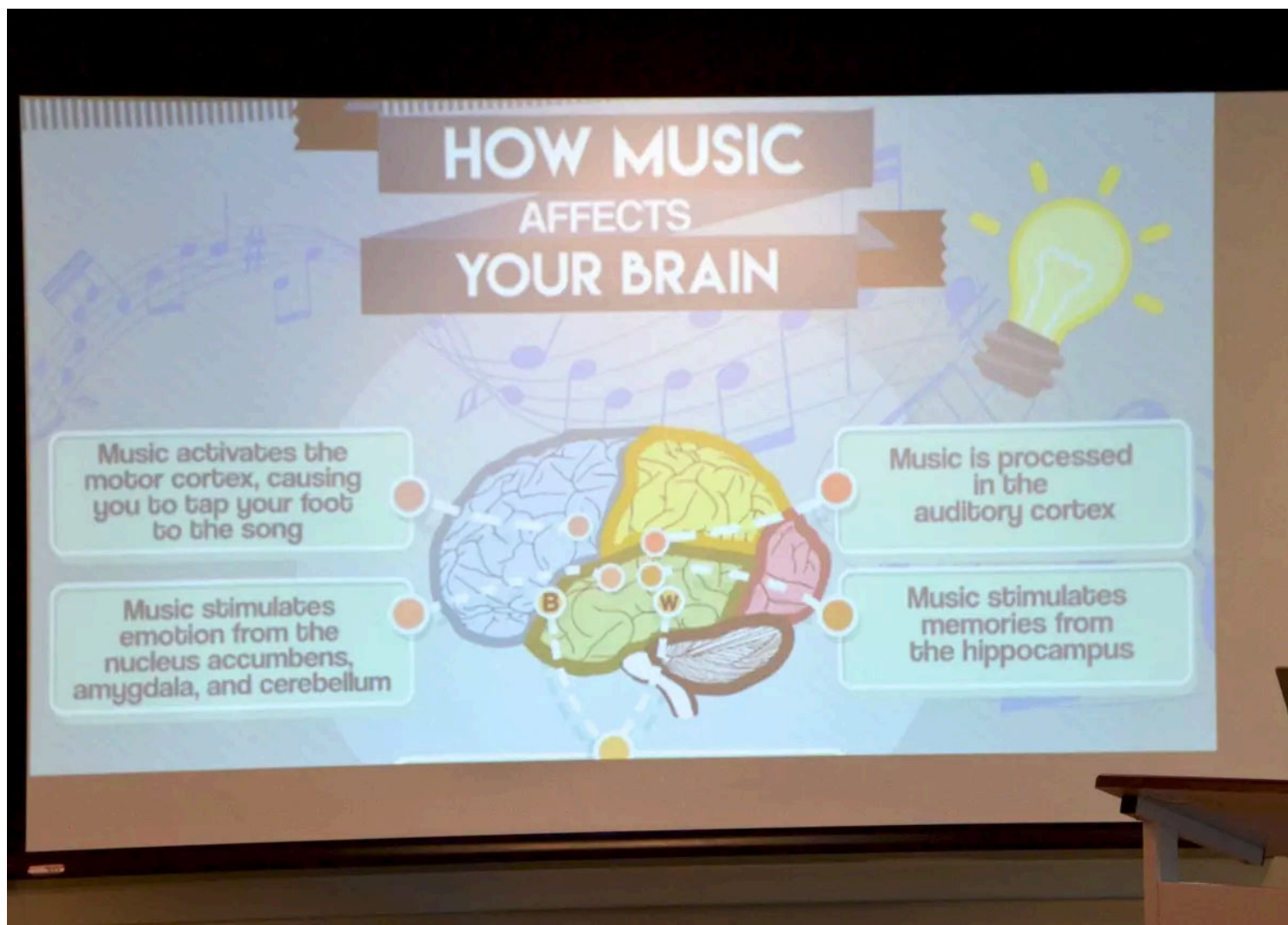
Skipper illustrated the power of using music to help anyone memorize facts. "It's very effective and just a functional use of music assigning a tune to what you need to remember."

She used the example of her husband putting words to a familiar tune to remind him of what he needs to take to work in the morning.

"He sings, 'I'm glasses, wallet, keys and phone,' based on 'There is a Tavern in the Town.'

"It's another source and anybody can do that," Skipper said. "It's one more chunk of input to keep that information in your brain."

She also noted how music is a tool when children in school are taught to sing the “ABC Song” to learn the alphabet.



A slide from the PowerPoint presentation during the Music for the Mind workshop shows the parts of the brain involved when one processes the sound of music. (Susan Hoffman)

Sitting in the front row for the session were Newport Beach residents Charles and Wanda Stansbury, who enthusiastically took part in the trivia quizzes and singalongs.

“I thought it was fantastic the way our minds were tuned into the songs,” said Charles Stansbury.

“It was amazing, very stimulating and lots of fun,” said Wanda Stansbury. “It was also very interactive and I need to come back again [when it’s offered] in September.”



Newport Beach resident Rayleen Creath's thoughts about the workshop echoed the Stansburys' take on it.

"It was fabulous, beautiful and brought our souls alive," Creath said. "I was blown away how many people knew the answers [to the trivia questions]. I liked that it was gentle and I would come back and do it again."

### **Susan Hoffman**

Susan Hoffman is a contributor to Times Community News.