



Feroze Mohammed with his new MP3 player and customized playlist.

MP3 players bring music and memories to those living with dementia

The Music Project is now available in York Region

“This is amazing, amazing. You guys have got to get one,” said Feroze Mohammed, a Stouffville resident who lives with Alzheimer's disease.

Feroze recently received a free MP3 player and customized playlist, courtesy of The Music Project, The Alzheimer's Society of York Region and the generous support of donors such as J.P. Bickell, Newmarket Rotary Club, Capital One and individuals who understand the value of music for those living with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias (ADOD).

Music is important for those living with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias as it relieves stress and reduces anxiety, depression and agitation.

According to the Mayo Clinic, “musical memories are often preserved in Alzheimer's disease because key brain areas linked to musical memory are relatively undamaged by the disease.” For people diagnosed with ADOD, it means remembering song lyrics and memories associated with it.

In the case of Feroze, in videos shared by his wife Jennifer Dance Bowen, he can be seen conducting the music on his MP3 player and singing along.

“Feroze has always enjoyed listening to music. It lifts his mood, gives him an activity and gives us a way of communicating since songs bring up memories that we can talk about,” Jennifer said.

Feroze recently received his MP3 player and said he was happy it was his to keep.

“This is amazing. I am hearing it in stereo all around me. This is beautiful,” he could be heard saying in the video.

Jennifer heard about The Music Project, where people living with dementia receive a free MP3 player, over-the-ears headphones and a customized playlist, at the Alzheimer Society of York Region’s (AS York) donor appreciation event in October.

She contacted AS York and was directed to a website, where she and Feroze spent a half-day choosing artists and songs for his MP3 player.

“As websites go, it’s fairly easy to navigate, but in order to make personalized choices of artists and songs, you need to devote some time,” she said.

The first question that came up - name 10 all-time favourite songs - was daunting, said Jennifer. Feroze could only come up with two songs. However, by filing out the application, their memories were jogged about songs and artists they enjoyed.

“By the end of the application, we had many more than 10 all-time favourites.”

Songs include Celine Dion and Josh Groban’s The Prayer; John Denver’s Take me Home, Country Roads; Momas and Popas’ California Dreamin’; James Taylor’s You’ve got a friend. Feroze even requested some Indian music, some Mighty Sparrow, steelband music, Jennifer said.

“The choices are amazing. I’d imagined it would just be mostly music from the old crooners, like Sinatra, but there’s opera, classical, big band, pop, soul, blues, jazz and music from the decades. There’s even calypso and reggae.”

Jennifer said with the categories, she and Feroze Googled the artist listed on the application and watched YouTube videos to confirm they wanted that particular song on the playlist.

“Ours truly is a personalized playlist of 100 songs.”

The MP3 player takes four to six weeks to arrive and remains with the person living with dementia.

People interested in receiving an MP3 player can visit <https://alzheimer.ca/en/york/We-can-help/music-project>

While units are provided free to those diagnosed with ADOD, each package costs AS York \$200.

To continue providing the gift of music to those living with dementia, AS York requires ongoing funding.

To donate to The Music Project, visit bit.ly/ASYorkDonate