



MacPhail Music for Life 2024-25 Evaluation Results

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Introduction

Since 2005, the Music for Life program at the MacPhail Center for Music has been offering music classes for older adults to provide the opportunity to learn and practice music skills and socialize with other adults who are interested in music. MacPhail teaching artists lead Music for Life sessions at senior living facilities in the Twin Cities metro area; MacPhail partners with more than 30 locations to offer these sessions. In addition to these sessions, MacPhail offers registration-based classes at a limited number of sites; these sites are in Minneapolis. MacPhail partnered with Wilder Research to conduct an evaluation of their activities in program year 2024-25

METHOD

Wilder Research worked with the MacPhail Center for Music to develop a survey to gather perspectives from Music for Life participants at the end of their participation in the program. The survey asked questions about participants' satisfaction with the program; the impact the program had made on participants' emotional and physical health, socialization, and musical skills; their favorite aspects of the program; and areas for program improvement. In total, 89 participants completed a survey at the end of their program.

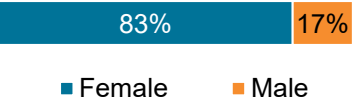
Evaluation results

PARTICIPANT SURVEY RESULTS

PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS

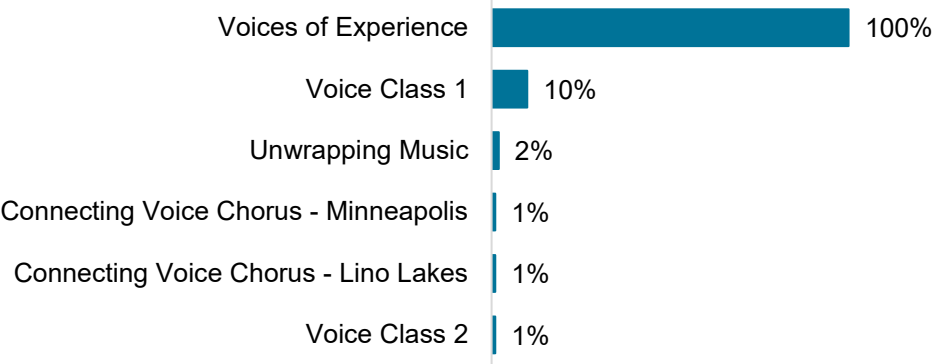
Music for Life participants were asked to share a bit about themselves when completing their survey. The majority of respondents identified as female (83%; Figure 1) and White (98%; 3% as Latino/a, 1% as multi-racial). All respondents were 65 years or older, with 13% reporting they were in their 60s, 65% in their 70s, and 22% in their 80s or older.

1. Participant gender identity (n=89)



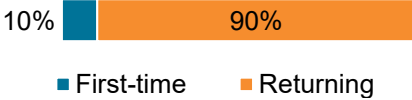
Respondents most commonly participated in the Voices of Experience Choir (100%) followed by Voice Class 1 (10%). See Figure 2.

2. Music for Life class participants were involved in (n=89)



Regarding first-time vs. returning participants, 9 in 10 respondents (90%) had participated in a Music for Life class previously and decided to return to the program (Figure 3).

3. First-time and returning participants (n=87)



In the survey, respondents were asked how they heard about Music for Life and were given a list of options to choose from. About 1 in 3 respondents (33%) heard of the class from friends, family, or acquaintances who had previously participated in a Music for Life class (Figure 4). Almost 2 in 5 (17%) said they learned about Music for Life via searching online.

4. How participants heard of Music for Life (n=80)

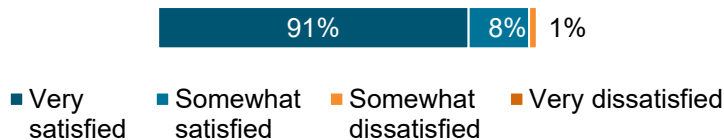
	%
Friends, family, or acquaintances who had previously participated in Music for Life	33%
Online search	17%
Social media (Facebook, etc.)	3%
Friends, family, or acquaintances who had not previously participated in Music for Life	7%

Nearly all respondents (97%) reported that they plan to sign up for another Music for Life class. These participants noted their enjoyment of the classes and the music as well as relationships with other members and teaching artists as why they would like to continue their participation.

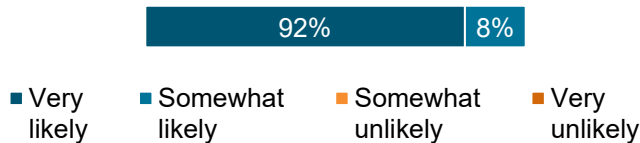
PARTICIPANTS FIND PROGRAMS ENJOYABLE AND VALUABLE

Nearly all respondents (99%) were very or somewhat satisfied with the course they participated in (Figure 5). Likewise, all respondents (100%) said that it is somewhat likely or very likely that they will recommend Music for Life to a friend or acquaintance (Figure 6).

5. Overall satisfaction (n=88)



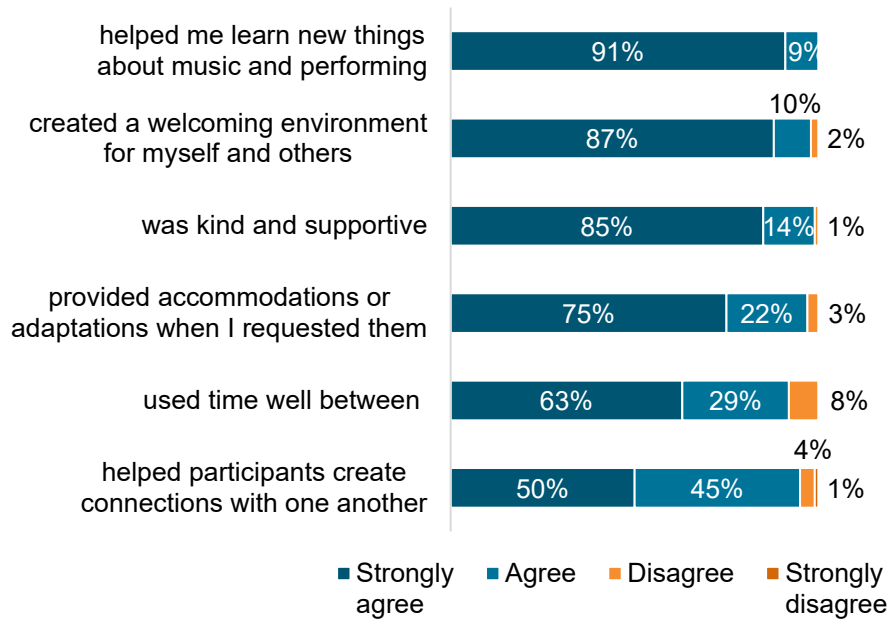
6. Likelihood of recommending program to a friend or acquaintance (n=88)



Respondents were very positive about the teaching artists who led their classes. All or nearly all respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their teaching artist created a welcoming environment for them and others, was kind and supportive, and helped them learn new things about music and performing (Figure 7). While this feedback is overwhelmingly positive, one area for improvement is helping to create connections between participants, with a smaller percentage of respondents saying that they strongly agreed with this statement.

7. Interactions with teaching artists (n=63-87)

My teaching artist...



PARTICIPANTS SHARE MUSICAL AND NON-MUSICAL MOTIVATIONS

The survey asked respondents about the importance of various aspects of their musical experience with Music for Life. All respondents (100%) said that learning new music and singing with fellow participants were very or somewhat important to them, followed by learning from the teaching artist(s) (96%) and learning musical skills (98%) (Figure 8).

8. Motivations – musical (n=85-88)

How important were the following aspects of your most recent experience with Music for Life?	Very important	Somewhat important	Not important
Learning new music	80%	21%	--
Singing or learning with fellow participants	80%	21%	--
Learning from the teaching artist(s)	71%	25%	5%
Learning musical skills	66%	32%	2%
Performing	44%	44%	13%
Singing or playing familiar songs	17%	49%	33%

Regarding the importance of non-musical aspects of their experience with Music for Life, nearly all respondents (98%) said that improving their mood was very or somewhat important to them, followed by getting to know new people (94%), expanding social activities (92%), and doing physical warm-ups (86%) (Figure 9).

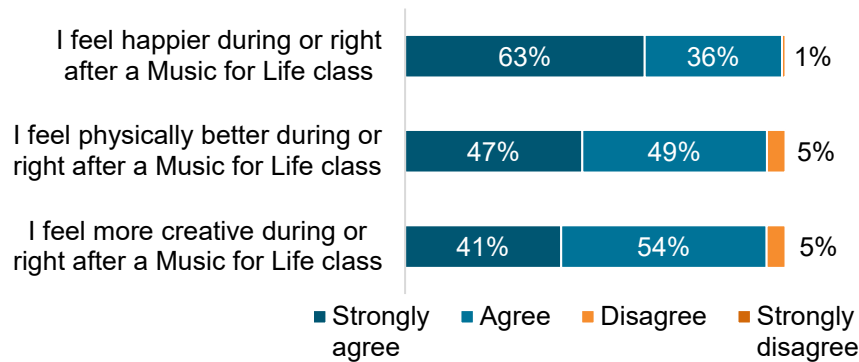
9. Motivations – non-musical (n=87-88)

How important were the following aspects of your most recent experience with Music for Life?	Very important	Somewhat important	Not important
Improving my mood	57%	41%	2%
Getting to know new people	53%	41%	6%
Expanding social activities	41%	51%	8%
Doing physical warm-ups	38%	48%	14%

PARTICIPANTS REPORTED IMPROVED WELLBEING AND SOCIAL CONNECTION

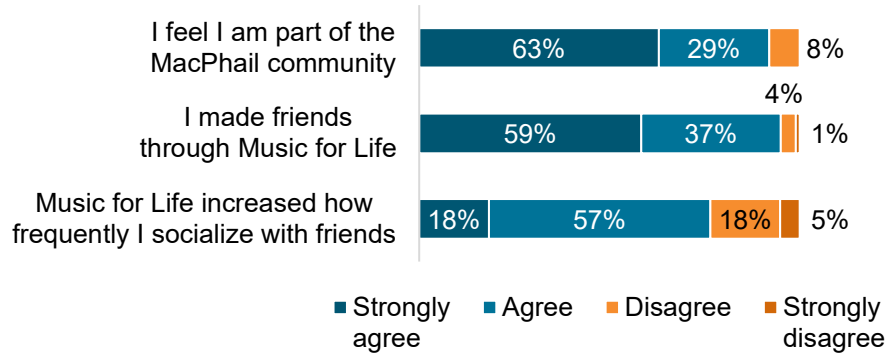
Regarding wellbeing, almost all survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed they felt happier (99%), physically better (95%), and more creative during or right after a class (95%) (Figure 10).

10. Impact of classes on participant happiness and on how participants feel physically (n=85-87)



Further, almost all participants agreed or strongly agreed that they feel they are a part of the MacPhail community (92%) (Figure 11). Almost all participants (96%) likewise agreed or strongly agreed that they made friends through Music for Life, with fewer participants (75%) agreeing or strongly agreeing that Music for Life increased how frequently they socialized with friends. Lastly, 3 in 5 respondents (60%) said that they keep in touch with fellow participants outside of class or rehearsal.

11. Impact of classes on participant's sense of social connection (n=85-87)



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT

Findings from this evaluation are similar to previous years. Recommendations from Wilder based on evaluation results are likewise similar:

- **Continue facilitating social connections among participants.** Especially since the pandemic, the Music for Life survey has generally shown that participants want more time and focus on social connection in Music for Life offerings. We recommend that MacPhail continue building on this success, making sure that all Music for Life offerings—in-person or virtual, large or small—includes focused time for relationship-building and making connections between participants.
- **Consider ways to incorporate diversity, equity, and inclusion more fully into the program, and pursue opportunities to serve more participants of color.** Similar to last year’s evaluation, the vast majority of Music for Life participants identify as White. MacPhail should dedicate time and resources to identifying ways to provide programming to older adults of color and low-income individuals. For instance, MacPhail could partner with more organizations that serve older adults, perhaps focusing on culturally specific organizations that serve older adults who identify as BIPOC as a way to improve, expand, deepen, and extend the program’s impact.
- **Consider opportunities to deepen connections with current participants.** Many respondents expressed appreciation for Music for Life, with all respondents saying that they would recommend Music for Life to friends or acquaintances. While not all participants may want additional engagement with the program, MacPhail could consider engagement opportunities beyond classes and rehearsals, such as social gatherings or community-oriented music events, to further invest in relationships with participants who want a deeper level of connection with program content, teaching artists, or fellow participants.

Acknowledgments

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Wilder Research, a division of Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, is a nationally respected nonprofit research and evaluation group. For more than 100 years, Wilder Research has gathered and interpreted facts and trends to help families and communities thrive, get at the core of community concerns, and uncover issues that are overlooked or poorly understood.

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