

# Case Study: Personalized Soundscapes Enhance Quality of Life for Residents Living with Dementia



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## Categories:

- ◆ Reduce Social Isolation, Feelings of Loneliness, Depression, and Use of Antipsychotics
- ◆ Increased Resident Engagement and Satisfaction, Social Networks, and Quality of Life

## About the Organization

### Organization Name:

Garden Spot Communities

### Main Contributors:

Laura Glick, Director of Activities at Maple Farm Nursing Home

Laura Gribble, Board-Certified Music Therapist at Garden Spot Communities

### Organization Type:

Assisted Living Facilities, Acute Rehab Facilities, Skilled Nursing Facilities, Memory Care Facility, Continuing Care Retirement Communities (CCRC)

### Organization Description:

Founded on faith in 1990, Garden Spot Communities is a licensed, non-profit provider of innovative housing and lifestyle services for older adults based in New Holland, PA. The Garden Spot Communities mission states, "We will enrich the lives of older adults as an expression of Christ's love."

## Project Description

In its continuing mission to enrich the lives of older adults, Garden Spot Communities has incorporated Composure into its skilled nursing and memory support areas to help residents improve mood and mindset, and support care team members in providing person-centered care. Composure's web-based platform is a non-pharmacological intervention that uses disposition assessment and personalized soundscapes to meet resident well-being needs. Care team members benefit from the improved behavioral outcomes of the residents, as well as from valuable and timely insights into dimensions of each resident's well-being, helping them to identify unmet needs and improve care.

## Socialization Model

Music, Facilitated Conversations, and Communications

## System Embodiment

Tablet, smart phone, smart TV, desktop computer, all-in-one computer, wired headphones, wireless headphones, wired speakers, Bluetooth speakers

## Business Model

Offered to residents as standard of care

## Background

Our mood and general outlook have a direct impact on our health. While it's not necessary to always feel happy and upbeat in order to stay healthy, the amount of comfort and peace we experience in our lives, regardless of circumstance, is a hallmark of sustained well-being.

Humans have instinctively used music and sound for thousands of years to communicate, connect with others, validate feelings, be more present, and transform their mood and mindset. In 2021, Garden Spot Communities engaged Composure, a digital well-being platform providing personalized soundscapes for healthy outcomes, to explore these concepts. Priority was given to skilled nursing and memory support residents that experience physical and/or cognitive limitations. Their inability to take part in engagement opportunities that other residents enjoy often creates a daily well-being "deficit" that can lead to negative outcomes like loneliness, depression, anxiety, and insomnia. Composure's approach to personalized sound is uniquely suited to help this segment of residents find calm, comfort, and peace.

In addition to directly providing benefits to residents, Garden Spot also wanted to explore how analytics supplied by the Composure platform might help care team members stay updated on resident well-being in ways that did not previously exist. The platform's data highlights dimensions such as changes in mood, alertness, comfort, and desired mood goals, as documented through the platform interface, all of which supplements each resident's Minimum Data Set (MDS) and regular charting by staff. These data points are tracked over time to identify possible changes and trends in well-being. Such changes can be linked to behavioral outcomes and provide insights that a resident is feeling increasingly unwell, even if not made evident by routine, clinical evaluations.

## Implementation Approach

Garden Spot identified Maple Farm, one of two skilled nursing communities, to begin conducting a pilot of Composure in two phases. Phase 1 was championed by the director of activities at Maple Farm, who used the platform with 15 residents chosen by her and Garden Spot's executive director of healthcare. The pilot phase was conducted over a four-month period, with usage data and feedback gathered throughout. Using readily available iPad tablets, the Composure platform was deployed over the internet with a list of participating residents preloaded to make implementation and data tracking automatic.

Garden Spot is a high-performing community, so showing improvements in overall resident disposition was a challenge. However, with regular use, the Composure platform data clearly showed both short-term and long-term benefits to residents' well-being. The Phase 1 results prompted Phase 2, which included select residents from both Maple Farm and Garden Spot Village skilled nursing units. To handle the larger scope of Phase 2, additional help was recruited, including a music therapist staff member and other non-clinical staff as well as members of Garden Spot's resident volunteer program. To launch Phase 2, Composure provided simple written instructions on how to access and utilize the platform. A dedicated staff member then conducted brief training sessions to discuss the pilot phase's goals and objectives, and the overall benefits of using Composure. This same staff member facilitated all communications with Composure before, during, and after the pilot phase.

For staff stakeholders, Composure delivered weekly data reporting via email. These reports (self-reported and staff-reported when needed) included the total number of sessions performed, total time spent listening to soundscapes, aggregate pre- and post-session disposition scores, and a percentage breakdown of selected mood goals per week/per cohort. Further data segmentation, such as usage per individual resident, their specific changes in mood, alertness, comfort levels, etc., were also made available upon request. Mood, alertness, and comfort levels are all captured by a 5-point Likert scale styled interface (represented by smiley face icons). The interface selections are recorded with the corresponding numeric values as data points which can be plotted on graphs or converted into "scores" to evaluate changes over time.

## Outcomes

***Reduced Feelings of Loneliness, Depression, and Use of Antipsychotics, while Increasing Resident Engagement, Satisfaction, and Quality of Life.***

Composure's Sonic Journeys app has helped Garden Spot Village and Maple farm improve the quality of life for residents in skilled nursing in several ways.

Combined, both phases of the Composure pilot at Garden Spot spanned a five-month period. Sonic Journeys was used to perform 317 sessions among 30 resident participants. The greatest improvement in overall disposition scores was seen among the 75% of all participants who were living with a dementia diagnosis. Additionally, a sampling of MDS measures gathered during a 60-day period showed 40% of the residents living with dementia experienced improvements in areas such as mood, eating performance, and reduction in PRNs (as-needed medications). Half of these individuals experienced improvements in more than one area, and in the case of two residents, there was evidence of fewer falls. Thirty-five percent of all participants had improved MDS measures during the trial.

The Composure pilot helped to build community and increase personal interactions between residents. Improved socialization and reduced loneliness were observed as a result of regular visits and engagement between residents, staff, and community volunteers who helped facilitate the use of Composure. For example, during Phase 2, resident

volunteers anecdotally shared that the opportunity to have a meaningful interaction with residents in skilled nursing improved their appreciation for their community. Specifically, one resident facilitated the trial with a woman who was non-verbal. After a 30-day period, the volunteer reported that the dedicated time together, around a specific project, formed a bond between them. Even though the resident was non-verbal, the two women found ways to communicate with each other. The regular interaction helped both the volunteer and the resident in skilled nursing find a new friend in each other.

Staff also reported that using the Sonic Journeys app helped them to find meaningful ways to interact with residents; one non-nursing staff member at Maple Farm reported that she felt like she was more in tune with the daily rhythms of the participating residents when she regularly facilitated the Sonic Journeys with them.

## Challenges and Pitfalls to Avoid

- ◆ **Equipment.** While the equipment needed was minimal, staff did need to secure iPads and Bluetooth speakers for the Sonic Journey.
- ◆ **Education.** Staff needed to educate residents in skilled nursing as well as volunteers on the importance of piloting the Sonic Journey app. They also needed to set expectations for the pilot period. While information was being tracked and gathered during the trial, staff needed to be clear with residents, family, and volunteers that this was an initiative to determine the effectiveness of an app and not a clinical trial.
- ◆ **Permission.** The pilot coordinators needed to receive permission from resident family members for the residents in skilled nursing to participate. This involved more education around the importance of the pilot and explanations for why Garden Spot Village desired to offer the Sonic Journey app to residents.
- ◆ **Muscle Memory.** Anytime team members need to introduce something new to residents, it requires effort to make it a priority and to remember to complete the task when other tasks are demanding time and attention.

## Lessons Learned/ Advice to Share with Others

- ◆ **Engage Volunteers.** When possible, engage volunteers to help facilitate the app. Although it requires a little more work on the front-end with training, using volunteers helps to increase engagement with and between residents to also relieve some of the staff burdens associated with implementing the app.
- ◆ **Celebrate Incremental Improvements.** Incremental improvements are good! Sometimes the improvements may be hard to identify in the daily rhythm of care; monitoring MDS data over time can show those improvements.