

I have always enjoyed music, sports, movies and learning about real people: their upbringing, struggles and triumphs. I started singing and playing guitar in church when I was 12 years old. A few years back, I was the guy with the guitar case open at a California beach or on the streets of Westwood, singing to make a few dollars. **One thing I noticed early on was the emotional impact music had on people.** Whether it was on the beach, the streets, or in a church, hearing a specific song would bring tears to people's eyes or great joy to their heart. **Music was moving and powerful!**

One day in 2015, my brother called me, excited about a documentary he had watched entitled **"Alive Inside: The Story of Music and Memory."** It shares the incredible impact music has on those living with the challenges of Alzheimer's disease and dementia. In all stages of the disease, music helps to ease loneliness, lift depression, help with pain management and bring the healing power of joy. For some people, it is the only thing that brings them back to life and remembrance, even if only for a few moments, as they remember and sing along to songs they knew years ago. My joy is to see them sing, tap their feet and give a smile of recognition.

Dementia runs deep in my family: great-grandparents, grandparents and uncles. After watching "Alive Inside", both my brother and I understood better why our family members had acted the way they did or could not remember our names. It now made sense. Personally, something indescribable lit up within me. I immediately felt a calling to sing to residents with Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia in assisted living communities and nursing homes. Within one week, I was singing at Good Samaritan in Prescott Valley! **Although "Alive Inside" recommends using headsets and MP3 players or iPods for people to listen to music, I felt that one thing was missing: the power of human touch and interaction.** I desired to bring "Alive Inside" to them in person: **I am their MP3 player!**

In the years that I have been playing guitar and singing for those living with dementia, I have learned that each and every person matters! They are people who have an incurable and unforgiving disease that slowly robs them of their memories and creates an overwhelming and stressful family environment.

I am so blessed to be able to sing, play guitar and sow music into the hearts of those who live with dementia and to see them sing along, light up, dance, or just softly smile in remembrance. Some of these people have no one that visits them~ ever! **It is my honor and privilege to hold a hand, to bring**

beautiful music and joy to these wonderful people and to make the day a good day for them!