

How to Start a “Talking Baseball” Program in Your Community

Learn about the program

This program, nicknamed **BasebALZ**, uses baseball as a topic for reminiscence therapy. Reminiscence therapy improves the well-being of Alzheimer’s patients by invoking and discussing their memories of baseball past in order to provide a fun activity that improves the socialization skills of the participants.

The central & south Texas (Rogers Hornsby Chapter) of the Society for American Baseball Research (SABR) has dedicated pages on their website to provide a wealth of information about baseball reminiscence programming:

- **About BasebALZ** (<http://www.sabrhornsby.org/about-basebalz/>) includes a ten- minute video that captures the spirit of the program from the perspectives of the participants, caregivers and volunteers. Also included on this page are “testimonials” from participants, VA social director, etc. along with basic information of how to conduct a meeting. At the bottom of the page is email contact information for our program leaders – we would appreciate the opportunity to talk to you about the program and answer any questions.
- **BasebALZ Resources** (<http://www.sabrhornsby.org/basebalz-resources/>) provides links to a wide variety of information:
 - Volunteer training plans created by Alzheimer’s of Texas
 - Links to info from other reminiscence programs (St. Louis, Scotland)
 - Sample agendas, PowerPoint presentations, etc. used over the last five “seasons” by the BasebALZ team in central Texas. We encourage anyone to use these materials (free of charge) to ease the workload of starting a new program in your community. Note that all materials can be easily edited to “personalize” the program to the interests of your participants.

Solicit Support

One of your first contacts should be with your **local Alzheimer’s office**. Determine their interest (note that some ALZ offices focus more on fund raising for research than providing on-going support for people who currently have the disease). However, if the office is interested, they can provide invaluable help securing facilities, providing publicity and marketing help and doing initial screening of prospective participants. Other groups that might be interested in supporting a program could be local healthcare/senior care centers, the Veteran’s Administration, military hospitals, or any group that provides care and support for people suffering from Alzheimer’s.

Next, recruit volunteers to help with the delivery of the program. Any baseball fans with an interest in helping those suffering from Alzheimer’s should make good volunteers. These may be local SABR chapter members, existing Alzheimer’s volunteers, or the charitable foundations of local minor- or major-league baseball clubs. The program leaders listed on the **About BasebALZ** page (noted above) would be glad to help with the initial contact with the SABR chapter in your area. We can also make ourselves available for a Q&A conference call, lessons learned, detailed review of existing materials and brainstorm on continuing support.

Get Started – Do Something

Host a “Talking Baseball” session at your selected venue. Be open to letting the discussion flow with the interests of the participants and their caregivers. You may find yourselves spending equal time on music, the movies, politics, or other topics as on baseball; and that’s OK – whatever gets the participants talking. Adjust the content over time to fit the interests of your particular participant group. And ... have fun !