



Wisconsin Representatives of Activity Professionals
wrap-wi.org

THAT'S A WRAP!

FEBRUARY 2026

THE POWER OF PRESENCE: WHY SHOWING UP MATTERS MORE THAN PERFECT PROGRAMMING

In activity departments, we often measure success by calendars filled, supplies prepared, and programs that run smoothly from start to finish. We strive for creativity, engagement, and variety—and rightly so. But in the heart of our work, there is something even more powerful than perfectly executed programming: presence.

Presence is not flashy. It does not require a theme, a budget, or a Pinterest-worthy setup. Presence is simply showing up—consistently, attentively, and authentically—for the people we serve.

Relational Care Over Rigid Perfection

Activity professionals are uniquely positioned to build relationships. We spend time with residents in moments of joy, boredom, grief, and transition. While structured activities are important, it is often the quiet moments—the shared laugh, the listening ear, the familiar face—that leave the deepest impact.

Residents may not remember every game played or craft completed, but they remember how they felt. They remember who noticed when they were absent. Who sat beside them when they didn't feel like participating. Who knew their story without them having to repeat it.

This is relational care in action: valuing connection over perfection, and people over plans.

Consistency Builds Trust

Showing up consistently matters. When residents see the same staff members day after day, it builds trust, emotional safety, and a sense of belonging. Even on days when programming changes, staff are short, or plans fall apart, your presence communicates stability.

In long-term care and community-based settings, where so much can feel out of an individual's control, consistency becomes a form of comfort. Simply being there—on time, attentive, and engaged—can be just as meaningful as the activity itself.

Being Seen Is Being Valued

Presence is also about truly seeing people. Noticing changes in mood. Remembering preferences. Acknowledging small victories. Respecting when someone chooses not to participate—and still honoring them with attention and dignity.

For many residents, activity professionals are the ones who see them as whole individuals, not diagnoses or room numbers. That recognition fosters purpose, identity, and emotional wellbeing. When we slow down enough to be present, we send a clear message: You matter.

Presence Doesn't Mean Doing More

In a field already stretched thin, it's important to say this clearly: presence does not mean adding more to your workload. It means shifting focus.

It means allowing a conversation to last a few minutes longer. It means adapting expectations when energy is low. It means recognizing that a meaningful interaction can happen even when the planned activity doesn't go as expected.

Presence gives us permission to let go of unrealistic standards and lean into what truly matters.

Sustaining Ourselves Through Connection

Interestingly, presence benefits not only residents, but professionals as well. When we prioritize authentic connection, our work feels more aligned with purpose rather than performance. It reminds us why we entered this profession in the first place.

In a season when burnout is real and demands are high, presence can ground us. It allows us to find meaning in small moments instead of chasing perfection.

The Heart of the Profession

At its core, activity work is about enhancing quality of life. While well-planned programs support that mission, it is our presence—steady, compassionate, and human—that truly brings it to life.

Perfect programming may impress, but presence changes lives.

As we move through February and beyond, may we give ourselves permission to show up as we are, knowing that being present is not only enough—it is powerful.



THAT'S A WRAP!

FEBRUARY 2026

LENDING LIBRARY SPOTLIGHT : THE COLORS WITHIN BY DEBBIE MERKEL, BA, BS, CSW

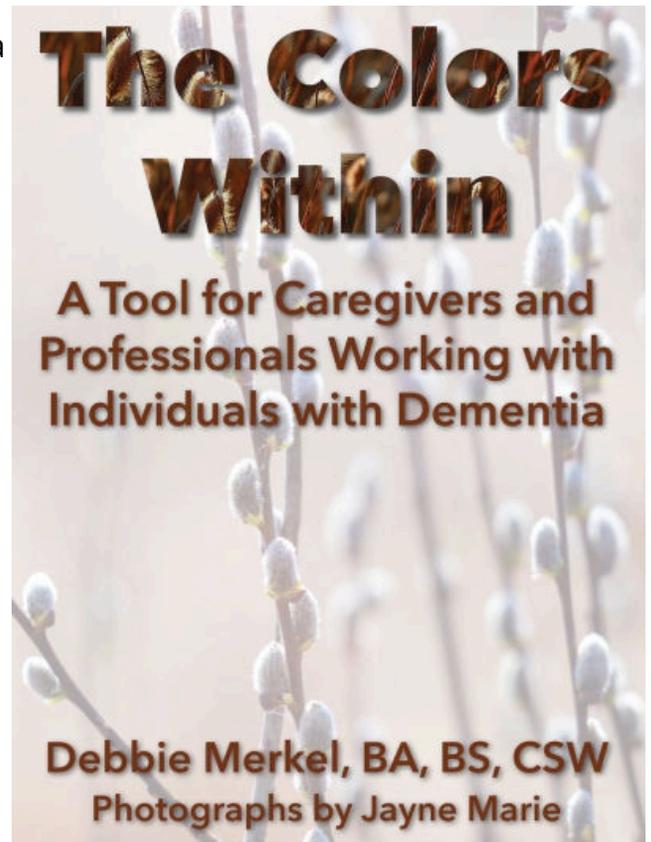
We're excited to share that our lending library has a new addition from a local Wisconsin author! The Colors Within is written by Debbie Merkel, BA, BS, CSW, a longtime social worker whose work has focused on meaningful connection and person-centered care.

Debbie even collaborated with expert Teepa Snow, who described this book as "a wonderful resource to use to connect with those living with dementia." The book features beautiful photographs taken right here in Wisconsin, paired with short, thoughtful sayings on each page.

One of the memorable lines from the book reflects its heart and purpose: "Our entire life journey is about connection... finding the beauty in everyone and everything, and expressing love and compassion."

The Colors Within was created with an important idea in mind: when we ask residents to reminisce about family photos, it can sometimes create pressure to remember names, places, or specific details. In contrast, a book of photography and simple reflections invites open-ended conversation, allowing residents to share thoughts and feelings without the expectation of recalling a specific memory.

We have many wonderful materials available in our lending library. If you're interested in starting the new year with a fresh read, reach out to Savannah—she'll be happy to help you choose the perfect book!



The Colors Within is a book with exceptionally beautiful photography and verse. How exactly you use this tool will depend on who you are, the person you're supporting, and the specific situation.

As one example, you may seat yourself on the individual's dominant side, then begin by holding up the book and indicating, "I have something I want to show you." Turn to a page and exclaim, "Oh, wow, look at this!" while you position the book between the two of you. Offer the opportunity for the individual to hold the book, or just to look.

Along with your words, perhaps use your finger to gesture to something on the page, whether it is a picture or words. Pause. Provide time and space for the person to take in the information, consider it, and possibly respond—either with a look, a gesture, or words.

The abilities of the individual may vary, so your abilities will need to be flexible as well. Try to encourage interaction without forcing conversation. Use this book as a possible opportunity to reminisce, to explore, to enjoy, or to find purpose.

*If you would like more information on how to use this wonderful resource to connect with those living with dementia, visit teepasnow.com. Teepa Snow, MS, OTR/L, FAOTA, Founder of Positive Approach to Care®**



ssevert@ensignservices.net



Wisconsin Representatives of Activity Professionals
wrap-wi.org

THAT'S A WRAP!

FEBRUARY 2026

LOVE IN ACTION : WHAT PERSON-CENTERED CARE REALLY LOOKS LIKE IN ACTIVITIES

Person-centered care is often discussed in policies, surveys, and care plans—but for activity professionals, it is lived out in daily practice. It is the foundation of meaningful engagement and a core value championed by the Wisconsin Representatives of Activity Professionals (WRAP). Across Wisconsin, WRAP members demonstrate person-centered care not as a concept, but as action—through intentional presence, flexibility, and a deep respect for the individuals they serve.

Knowing the Person Is the Practice

WRAP emphasizes the importance of understanding residents as whole individuals with rich histories, preferences, and identities. In activity departments statewide, this begins with listening. When a resident consistently declines group programs, WRAP-trained professionals look beyond attendance and ask why. They adapt approaches, offer one-on-one engagement, and honor choice—because engagement is measured by connection, not numbers. By centering programming around life roles, personal interests, and meaningful routines, activity professionals uphold WRAP's commitment to individualized care that supports dignity and purpose.

Flexibility Reflects Professional Judgment

Person-centered care requires trust in professional expertise. WRAP advocates for activity professionals to be recognized as skilled practitioners who understand when to adjust, simplify, or change course. A group program becomes smaller when energy is low. A craft becomes a conversation when residents need connection more than completion. Choice is always honored, and participation is never forced. These adaptations are not deviations from care—they are evidence of thoughtful, responsive practice.

Meaningful Engagement Over Busy Calendars

WRAP consistently promotes quality of life as a primary outcome of activity services. This means valuing meaningful engagement over filling time. Across Wisconsin, activity departments create moments of purpose by involving residents in familiar tasks, reminiscence, and shared routines. These experiences reinforce identity, autonomy, and belonging—key components of person-centered care. Activities are meaningful not because they are elaborate, but because they are intentional.

Activities as Advocacy

WRAP recognizes activity professionals as essential contributors to interdisciplinary care teams. Through consistent interaction and trusted relationships, activity staff often identify emotional or behavioral changes before others do.

By documenting observations, communicating with care teams, and advocating for resident needs, activity professionals elevate the role of activities within the broader care model. This advocacy aligns directly with WRAP's mission to strengthen professional recognition and standards.

Supporting the Professionals Who Deliver Care

Person-centered care cannot thrive without supporting the professionals who provide it. WRAP fosters education, connection, and shared resources so activity professionals are not working in isolation.

When departments are empowered to use professional judgment, supported through WRAP education, and connected to peers across the state, both residents and staff benefit. Sustainable, meaningful programming begins with supported professionals.

The WRAP Standard in Action

Person-centered care in activities is not about perfection. It is about intention, presence, and respect. Every day, WRAP members across Wisconsin put love into action—through small moments, flexible approaches, and unwavering commitment to quality of life.

This is not just good programming.

It is professional practice.

It is advocacy.

It is the heart of WRAP.





Wisconsin Representatives of Activity Professionals
wrap-wi.org

THAT'S A WRAP!

FEBRUARY 2026

National Association of Activity Professionals Annual Conference

Beyond the Ordinary

April 27-29, 2026

Chicago



Wisconsin Representatives of Activity Professionals
wrap-wi.org

48TH ANNUAL WRAP CONFERENCE

RIDE THE WAVE

SEPTEMBER 23 - 25, 2026

Chula Vista
Resort
WISCONSIN DELLS





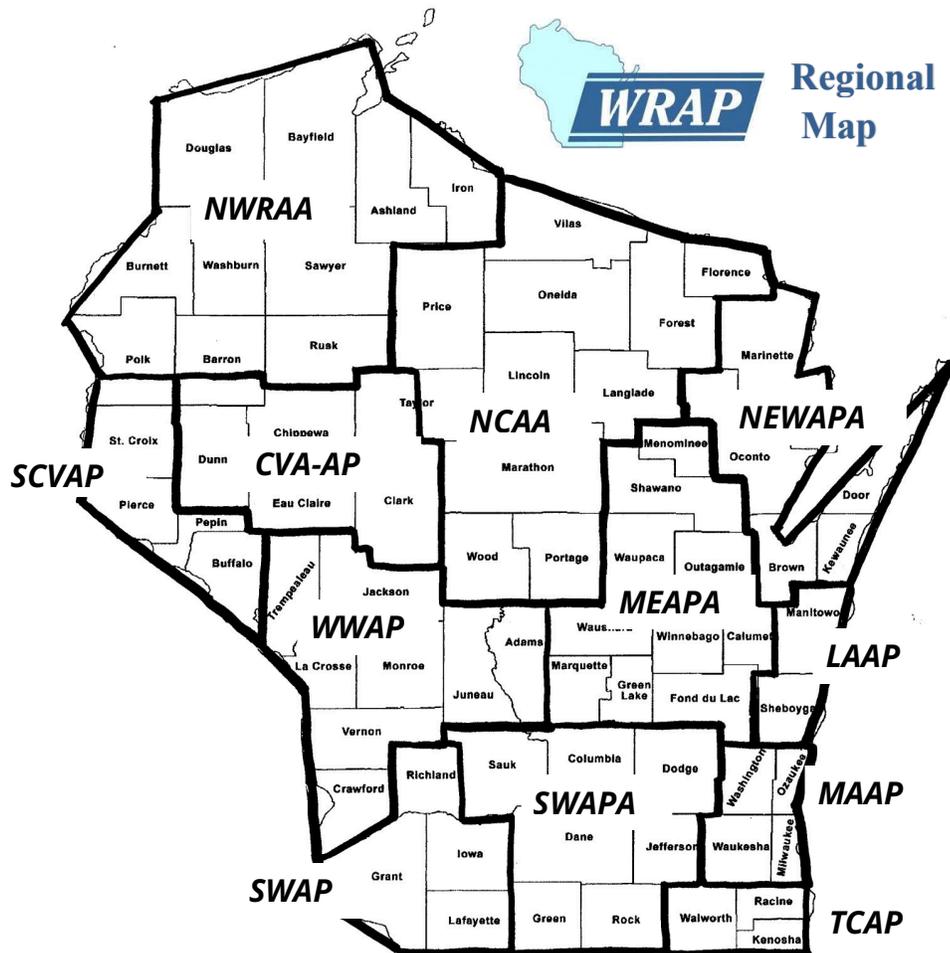
Wisconsin Representatives of Activity Professionals
wrap-wi.org

THAT'S A WRAP!

FEBRUARY 2026

CONNECT WITH YOUR REGIONAL GROUP THIS WINTER

Don't forget—your local WRAP regional group is one of the best resources you have as an activity professional. Whether you're looking for fresh programming ideas, educational opportunities, or just support from peers who understand the challenges of our field, your regional network is here to help. Reach out to your representative this Winter to stay connected, share ideas, and make the most of the season's opportunities together.



CVAAP - Chippewa Valley Area Activity Professionals - Mandy Alvar - malvar@dovehealthcare.com

MAAP - Milwaukee Area Activity Professionals - Kimberly Rosenau - kimberly.rosenau@gmail.com

NCAA - North Central Activity Association - Brianna VandenHeuvel - bvandenheuvel@nrcen.org

NWRAA - North West Regional Activity Association - Nadine Williams - nwilliams@dovehealthcare.com

SWAP - South West Activity Professionals - Regional Representative Needed! Contact acass@milebluff.com for more information!

TCAP - Tri County Activity Professionals - Susan Kaziric - activities@wsl-al.com

LAAP - Lakeshore Area Activity Professionals - Regional Representative Needed! Contact acass@milebluff.com for more information!

MEAPA - Mid-Eastern Activity Professionals Association - Alfie Gauss - agauss@edenbrookappellton.com

NEWAPA - North Eastern Wisconsin Activity Professionals Association - Melanie Fintelmann - melanf@rennesgroup.com

SCVAP - St. Croix Valley Activity Professionals - Angela Tellijohn - atellijohn@baldwincarecenter.com

SWAPA - Southern Wisconsin Activity Professionals Association - Regional Representative Needed! Contact acass@milebluff.com for more information!

WWAP - Western Wisconsin Activity Professionals - Amy Cass - acass@milebluff.com



Wisconsin Representatives of Activity Professionals
wrap-wi.org

THAT'S A WRAP!

FEBRUARY 2026

COLLABORATION IN ACTION : LEARNING TOGETHER WITH REGIONAL GROUP NCAA

Members of the Northcentral Activity Association met on Thursday, January 22nd for a Lunch and Learn hosted by Allison Bremer at Rennes Health and Rehab Center of Weston. Six members were in attendance, coming together with a shared goal: learning, connection, and professional growth.

The session included one hour of continuing education provided by Compassus Hospice, offering an overview of hospice services and exploring meaningful ways activity professionals can collaborate with hospice teams to better support individuals at end of life. This gathering highlighted not only the value of education, but the power of regional connection.



How Activities and Hospice Can Collaborate

Hospice and activity professionals share a common mission: enhancing quality of life. When these teams work together, support becomes more holistic, intentional, and resident-centered. Some meaningful collaboration opportunities include:

- **Life Review & Legacy Projects**
 - Activities can partner with hospice to facilitate memory books, recorded stories, letters, or legacy art projects that honor a person's life and relationships.
- **Personalized Sensory Experiences**
 - Collaborating on calming music, aromatherapy, favorite foods, or tactile items that bring comfort and familiarity.
- **One-on-One Engagement Support**
 - Activity professionals can assist hospice by providing individualized engagement tailored to energy levels, preferences, and emotional needs.
- **Family Support Through Activities**
 - Activities can create opportunities for families to connect—shared music, simple crafts, or guided reminiscence that ease difficult moments.
- **Communication & Advocacy**
 - Regular communication between activities and hospice ensures emotional changes, preferences, and comfort needs are recognized and honored.

Why Regional Meetings Matter

Regional meetings like this Lunch and Learn are a vital part of professional growth and advocacy.

They provide:

- Shared learning through continuing education opportunities
- Peer connection with professionals who understand the realities of the role
- Idea exchange that sparks creativity and problem-solving
- Professional support that reduces isolation and burnout
- Stronger advocacy for the role of activities within care settings
- Small gatherings can have a big impact. They strengthen confidence, reinforce professional identity, and remind members that they are not working alone.

Strengthening the Profession Through Connection

WRAP and its regional groups play a critical role in supporting activity professionals across Wisconsin. Meetings like this demonstrate how education, collaboration, and community come together to elevate practice and improve quality of life. When activity professionals connect, learn, and collaborate—everyone benefits.

ACTIVITY IDEA : LOVE SONGS THROUGH THE YEARS

Looking for a simple, engaging program to bring joy and connection to residents this February? Love Songs Through the Years is a music-based activity designed to spark conversation, encourage participation, and create meaningful moments for residents of all abilities.

This activity features familiar love songs from different decades, inviting residents to listen, hum along, tap to the rhythm, or simply enjoy the melodies. There's no expectation to recall song titles, artists, or specific memories—participants are free to engage in whatever way feels comfortable. This makes it ideal for residents with cognitive changes, memory challenges, or limited verbal communication.

The playlist includes timeless favorites such as "Unchained Melody" by The Righteous Brothers, "Can't Help Falling in Love" by Elvis Presley, "The Way You Look Tonight" by Frank Sinatra, "Stand By Me" by Ben E. King, "My Girl" by The Temptations, and "What a Wonderful World" by Louis Armstrong, along with many other classics. These songs are familiar, easy to enjoy, and encourage shared moments of laughter, relaxation, and conversation. Whether implemented in a group setting or as a one-on-one experience, Love Songs Through the Years provides an opportunity for residents to express emotions, interact socially, and experience joy in the present moment. Movement, smiles, humming, and conversation are all encouraged and celebrated.

Suggested Love Song Playlist

1. Unchained Melody – The Righteous Brothers
2. Can't Help Falling in Love – Elvis Presley
3. The Way You Look Tonight – Frank Sinatra
4. Stand By Me – Ben E. King
5. My Girl – The Temptations
6. At Last – Etta James
7. I Can't Stop Loving You – Ray Charles
8. What a Wonderful World – Louis Armstrong
9. Earth Angel – The Penguins
10. Blue Moon – The Marcels
11. Love Me Tender – Elvis Presley
12. You Are My Sunshine – Jimmie Davis
13. Moon River – Andy Williams
14. Chapel of Love – The Dixie Cups
15. As Time Goes By – Dooley Wilson
16. Crazy – Patsy Cline
17. Endless Love – Diana Ross & Lionel Richie
18. Let Me Call You Sweetheart – Bing Crosby
19. I'll Be Seeing You – Billie Holiday
20. Always – Irving Berlin



Take It to Your Facility

This program is easy to implement and can be adapted for group or 1:1 settings. Encourage residents to engage in any way that feels comfortable—listening, tapping, humming, or simply enjoying the music.

For activity professionals looking to try something new this February, Love Songs Through the Years is a meaningful, low-prep option that encourages socialization, emotional connection, and shared joy.