September 2008

Monograph

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America is graying. In just two years, the United States will have as many people over the age of 65 as there are under the age of 20. Challenges and opportunities abound in this demographic sea change. In response to this coming shift, a new paradigm articulates the idea of seeing older people for their potential rather than their problems. Arts and creativity programs provided by and for older adults are fast becoming accepted for their health, morale, and social benefits. This *Monograph* is intended to begin dialogue within the arts field about such programs by providing basic information on current trends and opportunities to integrate creativity and aging. An accompanying *Creativity Matters: Arts and Aging Toolkit*, now available online for free, provides in-depth information and support for arts program development that targets older adults: www.artsandaging.org.

Creativity Matters: Arts and Aging in America

by Gay Hanna and Susan Perlstein

Introduction

The "graying" of America promises dramatic change in every aspect of American life. One of the most profound changes is our culture's very perception of older adults: we're moving from a "deficit" approach that stresses losses to an "asset" approach that stresses strengths, potential, and achievements. Dr. Gene Cohen, author of *The Creative Age*, asserted that while problems certainly accompany aging, "what has been universally denied is the potential. The ultimate expression of potential is creativity."

A critical gap exists between arts provision and aging services for this growing audience. Arts participation is proven to increase the health and well-being of older adults,[1] however few organizations offer quality professional arts programs for them. After decades of pioneering work in the research, policy, and practice of arts and aging, providing improved arts services for this segment of the population is gaining momentum. Funding institutions are recognizing the importance of providing creative services for older adults and resources are shifting to support an American society where seniors will soon surpass the school-aged population in many urban and rural communities.

Arts organizations are poised to benefit from this tremendous need for high-quality, cost-effective creative activities. In a range of settings, the arts provide lifelong learning, meaningful community building, and respite to caregivers—all while uplifting individual creative expression. All people wish to grow older with dignity, living independent and purposeful lives for as long as possible. The arts are a key variable that provide meaning and true connection among individuals, families, and communities.

[1] Cohen et al., "The Impact of Professionally conducted Cultural Programs on the Physical Health, Mental Health, and Social Functioning of Older Adults," *The Gerontologist*, Vol. 46, No. 6. 726-734.

A New Horizon with Abundant Opportunity for the Arts

The United States is in the midst of a major demographic shift. The average life expectancy at birth rose from 47.3 years in 1900 to 76.9 years in 2000. People are living longer, which means that the population of older adults in the United States is growing. While in 1999 the number people over 65 totaled 34.5 million, or 12.7 percent of the population, it's projected that by 2030 more than 70 million people—that's 28 percent of Americans—will be 65 or older. The most dramatic shift, however, is among people 85 and older. Between 2000 and 2040, the number of Americans in this age range will more than triple—growing from 4.3 million to 19.4 million. By then, it is projected there will be more older people than school-age children.

Older people are currently, and projected to be, more educated and wealthier than previous generations of Americans. Since biomedicine has eliminated some of the more debilitating conditions of old age, we can expect people to live longer, healthier, and more productive lives than ever before. Therefore, professionals in many disciplines are keenly interested in the theory and practice of creative work by, and for, older people—whether fully active or frail. Those in creative fields are finding an extraordinary opportunity: to transform the experience of being old in America, giving meaning and purpose not only to aging but to the community at large.

Creativity: A New Paradigm for Aging

A new paradigm that articulates the idea of seeing older people for their potential rather than their problems defines the emerging field of creative aging. Creativity strengthens morale in

Jeanne Haynes of Stagebridge's Storytelling in the Schools program works with an area student. Based in Oakland, CA, Stagebridge is the nation's oldest senior theater company and produces intergenerational storytelling and theater projects that bridge the generation gap and stimulate positive attitudes toward aging. Photo by Philip Kaake.

Maria Acayan practices wheel throwing during a pottery class at The Community School of the Arts (CSA) at University of Connecticut in Storrs, CT. Photo by CSA.

later life, enhances physical health, and enriches relationships. It also constitutes the greatest legacy people can leave to their children, grandchildren, and society as a whole since, historically, elders have functioned as keepers of the culture who pass on the history and values of a community to the next generation.

Creativity, which is inherent in everyone, can be nurtured throughout life. This principle of lifelong learning underlies arts programs for older adults. Through creativity, the expertise gained with aging has the potential to offset the complications of aging. Engaging in artistic activities is an excellent, effective way to nurture the creativity in everyone, especially those rich in life experiences.

Recent research has shown that social and recreational activities (including artistic ones) can help older adults live longer, healthier lives. In his book *The Mature Mind*, Dr. Gene Cohen, M.D., Ph.D., and director of the Center on Aging, Health & Humanities at George Washington University documents recent discoveries in neuroscience that radically challenge conventional assumptions about the aging brain. For example, though it is true that the brain loses neurons throughout life, studies have shown that it is not the number of neurons that determines intellectual capacity, but rather the connections between neurons. These connections, known as dendrites, are tiny branches of the neurons that grow and develop when the brain is exposed to a rich, stimulating environment. Studies have shown that between one's early 50s and late 70s, the number and length of dendrites actually increases.

Two New Studies: Improving Healthcare and Reinventing Retirement

The first multisite longitudinal study on the impact of professionally conducted, participatory cultural programs on older adults was initiated by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) in fall 2001 through a public-private partnership. Dr. Gene Cohen led a multiyear study to evaluate the effects of participating in cultural programs on older adults' mental health, general health, overall functioning, and sense of well-being. The programs involved a range of art disciplines, including painting, pottery, dance, music, poetry, and drama, as well as material culture and oral histories presented in a creative context.

The study included 300 subjects with a median age of 80—an intervention group involved in ongoing arts programming and a control group who were not. The intervention group participated in weekly programs conducted by professional artists at three sites: Elders Share the Arts in Brooklyn, NY; Center for Elders and Youth in the Arts in San Francisco; and the Levine School of Music in Washington, DC. Questionnaires assessed the subjects' general and mental health, while a detailed inventory of their activities assessed their social functioning. The indicators measured were social engagement and mastery.

Guiding Principles for Program Development

Arts organizations can follow these guiding principles as they develop successful programs for older adults, regardless of physical or cognitive capacities:

- *Follow adult learning principles* by incorporating student expertise and life stories. All activities must be age appropriate, that is, andragogically based and inclusive of life experience and skills not found in pedagogical settings.
- *Develop programs sequentially* with measurable outcomes and evaluate them. The curriculum for adult learners needs to incorporate mastery or skill-building along with life experience. All outcomes should be measurable to give formative and summative evaluation to program development as well as meaning and purpose to the older adult learner's individual progress.
- *Engage professional artists* to lead program development and implementation. High-quality arts activities need the expertise of professional artists to reach the potential of the older artists often on a collegial basis in terms of lifelong learning.
- *Build sustainable partnerships* across agencies to promote public awareness and secure funding. Arts and aging services often exist in parallel universes as they are frequently within the same local governmental office. Resources can be expanded and critical needs filled through partnership between these services along with health, social service, and educational partnerships.

In findings that were statistically significant, the study demonstrated that arts participants had:

- better health
- fewer doctor visits
- less medication usage, and
- increased activities and social engagement.

Based on this landmark study, the projected healthcare cost savings is significant. The following findings are from the analysis of the data from the Levine School of Music site. Data from the other two sites is still under analysis. The control group reported taking fewer medications than the intervention group at baseline. By the two-year follow-up, the control was reporting taking more medication than the intervention group, which had been participating in an organized arts activity. This difference in medication use is significant. To illustrate the potential magnitude of savings as a result of lessened medication use by older adults participating in arts programs—specifically here in a chorale—compared to those not participating in arts programs, consider the impact of even a miniscule amount of medication use on a daily basis. The results in this study point to potentially huge savings. As an example consider a savings of 8 cents a day. If one multiples that 8 cents by the 365 days in a year and in turn multiplies this number by the 36.5 million individuals in America who are eligible for Medicare D, the estimated savings would be more than a billion

dollars a year. This comes to a total savings of approximately $13 billion a year for just those eligible for Medicare D.

Another important, recently released study is *Above Ground: Information on Artists III: Special Focus New York City Aging Artists* by Joan Jeffri, director of the Research Center for Arts and Culture, Teachers College, Columbia University. This study of 146 professional artists in the five boroughs of New York City found that older artists are role models for successful aging. They stay engaged in community life, retain their social networks, and continue to work professionally as well as maintain a personal income and healthcare coverage. Moreover, artists find great meaning and purpose in life. Other findings included high "Life Satisfaction Scale" evaluation rankings. The survey prototype for older artists has high self-esteem as a person and as an artist, communicates regularly with other artists, goes to the studio every day, may have changed art medium due to physical or other restriction but never considered giving up being an artist, and has sold work in the last year.

Beyond Bingo

In the 1970s, leaders in the gerontology field still conceived of the last years of life in terms of inevitable decline marred by disease and senility. The limited number of arts programs available in senior centers and nursing homes were no more than arts-and-crafts projects or sing-alongs intended to keep people busy. Then in 1975, Robert Butler, M.D., published *Why Survive?: Being Old in America*, which linked psychoanalyst Erik Erikson's theory of the life cycle to the process of aging. Erikson theorized that in the final stage of aging, which he called "Integrity vs. Despair," the key developmental task was to examine one's past, come to terms with one's losses, and celebrate one's successes, thereby achieving a sense of integrity. Butler connected this process with the presumed propensity among older adults to reminisce—something gerontologists had dismissed as unhealthy, even pathological. Butler, by contrast, saw reminiscence as central to integrating one's life—working out unresolved issues from one's past, present, and future—and challenged gerontologists to actively nurture this process.

Butler's work paved the way for a blossoming of reminiscence models in the field of gerontology. Consequently, senior centers and nursing homes increasingly embraced reminiscence activities including the arts. More recently, research on the benefits of arts programming has enabled the arts and aging professionals to articulate why they deserve a place among services for older Americans. From reminiscence to arts and crafts to professionally conducted arts programs, the current trends in older adult services are way beyond bingo.

Although currently limited in number, there is an extraordinary array of innovative professionally conducted arts programs for older Americans. Community-based arts programs in particular have gained momentum because they offer older people opportunities to learn and to play meaningful service roles in their communities.

A member of the Jenks Recorder Ensemble, a collaborative ensemble of the Winchester Community Music School and the Jenks Senior Center, rehearses for performance in Winchester, MA. Photo by Steve Johnson.

Program Development

The field of creative aging—comprised of arts, aging, education, health, and humanities—has developed a variety of categories of arts programs that address the needs of older people. These categories range from those who are working, retired, or otherwise completely active to those with physical or cognitive disabilities in the care of others at home or in institutional settings. The categories all involve skill-building and are not mutually exclusive, but all are driven by the protocols determined by their programmatic goals or setting—such as education, community service, or healthcare:

Education Programs: Lifelong learning through arts in conjunction with higher education extension services and community schools of the arts.

Community Building Programs: Social and civic engagement through participation in arts programs.

Healthcare Programs: Professional arts and arts-therapy programs for frail older people who are in the care of others at home, in long-term care facilities, or in healthcare institutions.

Educational Programs: Lifelong Learning through the Arts

Learning does not end when you leave school; it is a project that lasts a lifetime. New brain research rebuts the old idea that you cannot teach an old dog new tricks. The truth is that we are never too old to learn new skills. In fact, as we age our ability to handle complexity increases because of the proliferation of dendrites, "connections between neurons," in our brains. PET (positron emission tomography) electronic imaging technology shows that as we age, creative activity engages both hemispheres of the brain. Lifelong learning in and through the arts educates and engages older adults as learners and teachers, and it contributes to the growth of the individual, community, and society as a whole.

Arts organizations can find educational partners that specialize in adult education at local area continuing education centers, parks and recreation centers, extension services, and community colleges and universities. In fact, retirement communities are now being developed in concert with universities in order to offer these services. Oak Hammock, part of the University of Florida in Gainesville, is part of a national network of centers that are associated with universities called Osher Life Long Learning Institutes. More than 100 of these institutes have some arts programming and are potential partners for arts organizations that want to expand their programming for older adults. These learning institutes can also give arts organizations an infrastructure through which to promote their programming.

A lead service organization for community arts education is the National Guild of Community Schools of the Arts. Many of the Guild's nearly 400 member organizations—which, in addition to community arts schools, include arts centers and community education divisions of museums, conservatories, arts councils, and performing arts institutions—are developing arts education programs for older adults, often in partnership with aging services organizations.

One example of an arts education programs for older adults is the **Levine School of Music** in Washington, DC. The Levine School serves as a vital community resource by embracing two principles central to its mission: excellence and accessibility. One of the nation's largest and most prestigious community music schools, the Levine School offers music education for students of every age, ability, and background. To maintain the school's accessibility, it offers an

John Blackford takes guitar lessons at Concord Community Music School in Concord, NH. Photo courtesy of the National Guild of Community Schools of the Arts.

Serving Communities. Enriching Lives.

The methodology of Elders Share the Arts' program "Living History" is a synthesis of oral history and the arts that engages older adults in creativity and reminiscence. Through intergenerational workshops like the one pictured, participants discover commonalities across age and culture. Photo by Carolyn Zablotny.

extensive scholarship program that is both need and merit based. Currently, approximately 180 faculty-artists teach more than 3,500 children, youth, and adults at four campuses. It has a significant number and variety of offerings for adults, including the Senior Singers Chorale, voice lessons, community choruses, a noontime orchestra, and a New Horizons Band. Other programs include fitness walking followed by a discussion of the music the walkers listened to on their headphones during the walk, book groups focusing on books about music, and free performances by faculty artists and students.

New Horizons is a nationwide arts education program that serves older adults. New Horizons provides entry points to music making for adults, including those with no musical experience at all, as well as those who were active in school music programs but have been inactive for a long period. Sponsoring organizations for New Horizons' music programs include music dealers, schools, community music schools, college music departments, recreation centers, and senior centers. A few programs are sponsored by Osher Lifelong Learning Institutes. There are currently more than 130 active programs across the country.

Community-Building Programs: Social and Civic Engagement through the Arts

Magazines and newspapers are continuously running articles about changes in attitudes toward aging. The current system of senior services has become outdated. As hundreds of senior centers redefine themselves and their services to become more engaging community and cultural centers, the opportunities for arts organizations to provide services are nearly unlimited. Recently, the Department for the Aging in New York City gave the Department of Cultural Affairs $1 million in grant money to fund 57 cultural organizations to build arts programs within 159 senior centers. The need for new and engaging programs to reinvigorate the substantial civic investments in facilities such as senior centers, libraries, community centers, and public housing developments is expansive. In addition, performing arts centers such as the New Jersey Performing Arts Center are becoming conveners of conferences, artists' trainings, and network meetings to support arts and aging program development.

Founded in 1979, **Elders Share the Arts** (ESTA) is a community-based organization in Brooklyn, NY, that works to validate personal histories, honor diverse traditions, and link generations and cultures through "Living History Arts." Rooted in Robert Butler's pioneering work on life review and reminiscence, this unique synthesis of oral history and the creative arts helps older adults draw on their life experiences and transform their memories into art. ESTA's staff of trained professional artists work with older adults and intergenerational groups in community-based settings throughout New York City—including senior centers, nursing homes, schools, and libraries—to develop plays, literary booklets, murals, photographic essays, and other projects. The works are presented to the community at large through annual "Living History Arts" festivals.

Liz Lerman Dance Exchange in Takoma Park, MD, is a professional cross-generational dance company that defines dance as a multidisciplinary art form. It performs new dance works both across the United States and internationally. Liz Lerman Dance Exchange also conducts residencies that bring community groups together to experience the expressive power of dance and explore important issues through movement and story. Public performances frequently include audience participation. Facilitated by Liz Lerman Dance exchange, community workshops in schools, senior centers, hospitals, healthcare facilities, places of worship, prisons, community centers, and corporate and government offices use dance and story to share participants' ideas, observations, and experiences.

Stagebridge Senior Theatre Company is the nation's oldest senior theater company. Located in Oakland, CA, its actors, storytellers, students, and volunteers range in age from 50 to 95. The company's mission is to make theater accessible to older adults and to use theater and storytelling to bridge the generations and stimulate positive attitudes toward aging. Stagebridge's intergenerational programs include touring senior theater productions and storytelling in schools to stimulate language arts and social studies curriculums. For example, older actors in the literacy-based play "Grandparent Tales" bring storybooks to life, stimulating children to read and gather stories from their own grandparents.

Healthcare Programs: Improving Health and Well-Being through the Arts

Arts programs, with the primary goals of lifelong learning and community-building, have documented health benefits, and those arts programs designed for healthcare settings powerfully and specifically address clinical issues. In this arena, professional artists and art therapists play pivotal roles. Professional artists focus on creative expression in terms of mastery and social engagement. On the other hand, art therapists, accredited by their respective national associations, use the arts as intervention for improving specific physical and/or mental health outcomes including improved cognition. Therapists are usually fine artists in their own right, but are also educated in the physical and psycho-social sciences. The role of art therapists is not mutually exclusive from the role of professional artists, who serve as teachers or resident artists in healthcare environments. Both professional artists and art therapists have important roles to play in creating healing environments for patients and caregivers.

In fact, the arts are powerful agents in the healthcare environment in terms of safety, workforce retention, and medical education.

MoMA Educator Gordon Sasaki leads a Meet Me at MoMA program for individuals with Alzheimer's and their family members and caregivers. Photo courtesy of Robin Holland/ The Museum of Modern Art.

The Society for the Arts in Healthcare is a leading national organization that supports developing and sustaining arts programs within medical settings, including long-term care. This organization provides a consultant service and seed funding for program innovations. Exciting developments are also coming from community organizations such as museums. At the Museum of Modern Art in New York City, the monthly Meet Me at MoMA program invites patients and caregivers to visit the museum for guided tours given by museum educators during times when the museum is closed to the public. This program has brought about clinical breakthroughs in terms of patients interacting with others and much needed respite for caregivers.

TimeSlips is a nationwide arts in healthcare program developed in 1998 by Anne Basting, Ph.D. TimeSlips is an innovative, effective storytelling method in which group sessions of up to a dozen people in the middle stages of dementia tell stories. The facilitator plays down the importance of memory, using an image to prompt creative responses. S/he asks open-ended questions and weaves together all the answers, from the poetic to the nonsensical, into a story. There is a great deal of laughter, singing, and movement in the stories as well. TimeSlips has generated hundreds of stories and produced plays and art exhibits. This program celebrates the creativity of people struggling with Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia and rekindles their hope for human connection.

New Tool Kit Now Available

Creativity Matters: The Arts and Aging Toolkit is a practical guide to best practices for developing new creative aging programs and strengthening existing ones. The tool kit, written by Johanna Misey Boyer, a consultant for JMB Arts Management, is a product of a partnership between the National Center for Creative Aging, the National Guild of Community Schools of the Arts, and the New Jersey Performing Arts Center.

The tool kit is available for free online in English and Spanish and available in print for $35. For additional information on the tool kit or to place an order, contact the National Guild office at 212.268.3337, x 16 or online at www.artsandaging.org. This partnership project was sponsored by MetLife Foundation, NAMM: The International Music Products Association, the Healthcare Foundation of New Jersey, Roche, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Additional new arts and aging publications:

- *50+ Igniting a Revolution to Reinvent America* by Bill Novelli, CEO of AARP, with Boe Workman
- *Above Ground: Information on Artists III: Special Focus New York City Aging Artists* by Joan Jeffri with contributions from Douglas D. Heckathorn, Michael W. Spiller, and Jenifer Simon; published by the Trustees of Teachers College Columbia University/Research Center for Arts and Culture
- *Art and Dementia, 2007 Special Lecture* by Bruce L. Miller, M.D., published by MindAlert, a joint program of the American Society on Aging and MetLife Foundation

Kairos Dance Theatre in Minneapolis, MN, is a 19-member dance company spanning four generations, with performers ranging in age from 6 to 91 years old. Kairos Dance Theatre is one of only a handful of intergenerational modern dance companies in the United States and the only one in Minnesota. Its mission is to share the joy of dance and nurture intergenerational connections by offering performances and opportunities for creative collaboration that celebrate people of all ages, abilities, and experiences. The theater believes there are many ways of dancing and that each person has his or her own dance to share and story to tell. Each year, Kairos Dance Theatre presents 15–20 public performances featuring works from the Kairos repertoire, new work, and pieces created in collaboration with partners. This group brings dance into the community, connecting with audiences in both traditional concert venues and in spaces where dance is not usually found, such as parks, libraries, nursing homes, museums, festivals, conferences, and community centers. All Kairos Dance Theatre performances are interactive and include an opportunity for audience members to join in and dance.

For other best practice examples, reference NEA's Office of AccessAbility at www.NEA.gov/Resources/Accessibility/Index.html and the *Creativity Matters: The Arts and Aging Toolkit* at www.artsandaging.org.

Catherine Willis in *Never Too Late*, a popular musical revue from Stagebridge. Based in Oakland, CA, Stagebridge is the nation's oldest senior theater company. Photo by Stuart Kandell.

The White House Mini-Conference on Creativity and Aging

The National Endowment for the Arts convened the White House Mini-Conference on Creativity and Aging in Washington, DC, on May 18–19, 2005. Key players in policy, research, best practices, and support convened to make recommendations to the White House Conference on Aging. These resolutions addressed three areas: arts in healthcare, universal design, and lifelong learning in community. This report is available at www.NEA.gov/Resources/Accessibility/aa/Contents.html.

Key Concerns for Program Development

Developing programs must keep in mind several key concerns: accessibility, cultural sensitivity, and cross-generational development.

Regarding accessibility, older people may need accommodations in terms of transportation, economic concerns, and health issues, including physical and cognitive limitations. Partnerships with other organizations such as the area agencies on aging, which can be found in every community, can help with providing technical assistance as well as resources.

It is important to remember that every culture has traditions to share and ways to communicate the life experience of aging. Arts programs offer an excellent opportunity to build cultural competency across society and in service sectors, especially in the area of caregiving. Most local aging service agencies have multicultural components and are open to collaboration.

Intergenerational programs have the potential for perhaps the most profound contributions made through the arts. However, these programs require substantial resources in terms of time and talent to facilitate them successfully. There are various models readily available to assist in this process. Generations United is a national service organization that directly supports local providers with technical assistance for intergenerational program development.

City Launches SM(ART)S: Seniors Meet the Arts

New York City's Department for the Aging, Department of Cultural Affairs, and City Council have partnered on the largest municipal initiative to connect seniors to the arts. SM(ART)S: Seniors Meet the Arts is a $1 million city-funded initiative that brings cultural organizations and senior centers together to enhance senior participation in the creative life of the city.

Selected through a competitive application process, 57 cultural organizations have partnered with more than 150 senior centers in neighborhoods across the five boroughs to provide a variety of hands-on programs, such as jewelry design, storytelling, circus arts, horticulture, blues cabaret, creative writing, intergenerational theater, and cinema. Some examples of cultural and senior center partnerships include:

Pregones Theatre, dedicated to performance of original musical theater and plays rooted in Latino cultures, has partnered with six Bronx-based senior centers, including the Melrose Mott-Haven Senior Center. Pregones Theatre's teaching artists are conducting interactive workshops focused on poetry recital, storytelling, and choreographed movement, culminating in a performance exchange offering seniors the experience of performing on a professional stage. Seniors are also attending Pregones Theatre's musical performances.

Artichoke Dance Company in Brooklyn specializes in movement that echoes the dynamism of human relationships. The company is offering seniors at Fort Greene Senior Action Senior Center dance-theater classes focused on improvisation exercises that incorporate verbal and movement improv, group song, and poetry. Classes will culminate in a special performance by seniors for family and friends.

Manhattan's **Music from China** preserves, develops, and promotes Chinese music to audiences throughout the United States and internationally through performance and education programs. Working with City Hall Senior Center and its predominantly Chinese-American population, Music from China engages seniors in the Chinese performing arts through hands-on workshops with professional artists and musicians. Through performance, seniors are also conducting an intergenerational sharing of Chinese cultural heritage.

Program Funding 101

Arts organizations don't have to reinvent themselves to participate in this new market, but can build upon their already strong foundations of arts in education, community-building, and social engagement. Creativity and aging programs are fundable through arts, humanities, education, social service, public health, civic engagement, workforce development, wellness, and intergenerational programs. Creativity and aging programs can also receive support from organizations that address cultural competency; healthcare, including treating memory loss and caregiving for the caregiver; respite care; access/disability services; and aging services.

Funders are interested in three critical issues: 1) healthy aging and lowering of healthcare costs; 2) civic engagement in the building of social capital; and 3) workforce development, which includes the retention of caregivers (medical and paraprofessionals) as well as the changing face of retirement (e.g., older people are moving from the for-profit to the nonprofit sectors in both paid and volunteer jobs).

Funding Precedents

In spring 2008, the NEA created the Creativity and Aging in America grant program, which provides important government funds on a national level. As a pilot funding initiative, Creativity and Aging in America focuses on the active participation of older adults in the arts as creators, specifically through literature and/or music activities.

Based in Oakland, CA, Stagebridge is the nation's oldest senior theater company and produces intergenerational storytelling and theater projects that bridge the generation gap and stimulate positive attitudes toward aging. Photo by Stuart Kandell.

Stagebridge's premiere improv troupe Antic Witties spoofs the Antiques Road Show. Based in Oakland, CA, Stagebridge is the nation's oldest senior theater company. Photo by Howard Gerstein.

In February 2008, the New York City Department for Aging set a major precedent in interdepartmental funding by a local government. The Department for the Aging transferred $1 million for grants to the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in New York City, which supported 57 arts organizations that will produce programs in more than 150 senior centers citywide (see sidebar on page 12 for more information).

Many private foundations also recognize the growing need for arts programs for older adults. The Atlantic Philanthropies convened a summit at the Council on Foundation's May 2008 Leadership Summit to promote the funding of aging programs. As one of the three key topics addressed, funding of arts programs figured prominently in the discussion and included a keynote presentation from NEA Chairman Dana Gioia.

Funding Resources

Funders with an interest in the fields of aging, education, and healthcare can be approached for resources for creativity and aging programs. In addition to grants and contributions, many organizations can build income for program development through fee-for-service contracts. Important resources also exist through government, foundation, corporate, and individual sources.

Government sources in the field of aging include the federal government's Administration on Aging and Area Offices on Aging. Federal funding moves through state offices on aging to local departments for the aging and area agencies on aging. By working in partnership with an institution such as a senior center, arts organizations can identify funding sources through local departments for aging. Often contracts for services are more available than grants. In addition, the NEA and state and local arts councils provide funding to creativity and aging programs through arts education, folk arts, and community partnership grants, such as arts in healthcare programs. Many intergenerational arts activities receive funding from local departments of education—either as an integrated part of the curriculum that involves transforming oral history into an art form or as a special assembly program with breakout classroom workshops.

Many of the larger foundations have funding streams in both the arts and aging, although they may be in separate divisions. The major foundation funders in aging are the Atlantic Philanthropies and the Weinberg Foundation. The Dana Foundation specializes in arts education and encourages intergenerational programs. The Brookdale Foundation focuses on caregiving, including respite care. An excellent resource on philanthropy and aging can be found in the 2007 summer issue of *Generations, A Journal of the American Society on Aging*. This issue identifies major funders and ways to create sustainable programs.

On the corporate funding side, major pharmaceutical companies that serve older people as well as insurance and drug management companies play a key role in funding creativity and aging projects. Johnson & Johnson, Pfizer, GlaxoSmith Kline, CVS Caremark, and Wal-Mart all provide significant funds to healthcare and aging services through their philanthropic efforts. MetLife Foundation provides funding to both the arts and aging. NAMM: International Music Products Association supports arts programs focusing on lifelong learning.

In addition to foundations and corporations, individuals can be a prime source for funding. More than 50 percent of total discretionary income in the United States is controlled by people 50 years of age and older. Furthermore, older people hold the majority of positions on governance boards in both the for-profit and nonprofit sectors. Individual gifts are a primary vehicle for funding local arts programs and aging programs and should also be pursued for creativity and aging programs.

The Time Is Now! Join the Longevity Revolution

A new horizon is upon us with opportunities for the arts to be profoundly involved in the Longevity Revolution. Critical issues in healthcare, workforce development, and civic engagement are being addressed by innovative high-quality arts programming that engages older adults in powerful ways. New partnerships among healthcare and aging services have the potential to dramatically shift and expand resource development for the arts toward a new paradigm for aging—including asset-based, lifelong learning; community service; and health and wellness based on aging in place. The ability to provide services for this demographic will yield greater engagement by older Americans and add to the vibrancy of the nation's communities.

About the Authors

Gay Hanna, Ph.D., M.F.A., is executive director of the National Center for Creative Aging. She is a specialist in arts administration and policy development in community service. A contributing author to *The Fundamentals of Arts Management*, among other books and journals, Dr. Hanna holds a guest faculty appointment at The George Washington University, School of Medicine and Health.

Susan Perlstein, M.S.W., is founder of the National Center for Creative Aging (2001) and Elders Share the Arts (1979) and won the United Nations' Year of the Older Person Award for Intergenerational Programs in 1998. She is author and editor of numerous articles and journal editions including *Arts and Aging and Generations, a publication of the American Society on Aging* (Spring 2006).

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AMERICANS for the ARTS

1000 Vermont Avenue, NW
6th Floor
Washington, DC 20005
T 202.371.2830
F 202.371.0424

info@artsusa.org
www.AmericansForTheArts.org

Authors
Gay Hanna
Susan Perlstein

Editor, *Monograph* series
Marete Wester

Managing Editor
Kirsten Hilgeford

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About the National Center for Creative Aging

The National Center for Creative Aging (NCCA) was founded in 2001 and is dedicated to fostering an understanding of the vital relationship between creative expression and healthy aging and to developing programs that build on this understanding. Based in Washington, DC, NCCA is a nonprofit organization with 2,500 members. It is affiliated with The George Washington University and is an Americans for the Arts Research and Field Development partner.

www.creativeaging.com