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The Arts and Older Americans

Andrea Sherman, Ph.D., Intergenerational Specialist, Mill Street Loft, Editor

Foreword

by Jane Alexander
Chair, National Endowment for the Arts

When I think about the connection between art and aging, I think of my father who lived in a nursing home after he had a major stroke in his early 70's. Once a week, a poet came into the home to do a reading, and my dad looked forward to those days with the poet for their promise of an authentic experience that spoke directly to his spirit and stirred his imagination and to his considerable literary skills.

The Arts Endowment holds as its guiding principle that the authentic experience of the arts should be available to people of all ages. Through our grants programming, the Arts Endowment works to ensure the continued involvement of older adults as artists, teachers, mentors, students, volunteers, patrons, and as consumers of the arts. The energy, wisdom and creative potential that older people bring to the arts are part of our cultural heritage. And artists do not retire. Learning and growing is a lifetime affair, and the imagination burns as brightly in youth as it does in maturity.

Communities benefit when older people, with their wisdom and lifetime experience, transmit their skills and perspectives to younger generations. I am reminded of Margaret Mead's words of wisdom: "It is utterly false and cruelly arbitrary to put all learning into childhood, all the work into middle age, and all the regrets into old age."

Dancing, painting, weaving, writing, singing — indeed all the arts — hold something for everyone. They speak the language of the soul. From the first moments of life to the last, we are all capable of being artists, creating our

"Some of our most powerful works of art have been produced by older Americans — by hands that have engaged in years of hard work, eyes that have witnessed decades of change, and hearts that have felt a lifetime of emotions. Our whole society benefits when older Americans use their talents and experiences to become involved in the arts as creators, teachers, mentors, volunteers and audiences."

Hillary Rodham
Clinton



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“The energy, wisdom and creative potential that older people bring to the arts are part of our cultural heritage. And artists do not retire. Learning and growing is a lifetime affair, and the imagination burns as brightly in youth as it does in maturity.”

*Jane Alexander
White House
Conference on
Aging
Mini-conference
April 10, 1995*

vision of the world through the power of our imaginations. In early childhood, we learn a complex system of symbols and metaphors just to be able to speak. Our minds allow us to discriminate the colors of the rainbow, the rhythms of sound, the geometrical design of the built and natural universe, and the drama of family, work, love and life. Art is so inextricably connected to our lives that we sometimes take for granted its place in our spiritual, intellectual and emotional core. But it is always there. In the innocence of childhood, the imagination lies close to the surface, but as we age, imagination and creativity deepen through our accumulated experience and wisdom. As individuals, each of us are the walking repositories of our own culture.

Art is a bridge across generations. Not so long ago, when extended families lived close together and shared each other's daily lives, the arts — stories, song, music — were a way to connect generations within families and communities. When I was in the town of LaCrosse, Wis., a grandmother came up to me to talk about a project that we supported in her community. The children in the local school were asked to gather the stories, legends, myths, and histories of their families to create a community mural, history and video, in addition to informing the youngsters of their roots. The grandmother said that she was thankful that this project had come along because her grandmother had rarely talked with her and now they were asking her questions all the time.

Art is a way out of isolation. I worry about the hours that the television consumes of all of our lives, and in the case of older people, there is a very real danger of leading insular days and nights in front of a television set. Art can open the door. Many arts organizations are finding ways to make it easier for people to come in through reduced ticket prices, new accessible entrances, seating, galleries and the like. The arts are one area where people can come together. Just as they reach across generations, the arts open doors to belonging, to being part of the community.

Art knows no age. For an older artist, the body changes, but as I said, the imagination may still burn bright. As an actor, I will never retire. I think of an actress like Jessica Tandy who worked almost until the day she died. Or

painters like Picasso who was dazzling at 90, or Grandma Moses who didn't even begin to paint until her old age. Prima ballerinas may have to retire at a relatively young age, but they can keep on dancing, teaching, creating — think of Martha Graham.

Art, for me, is the ultimate quality of life issue, because it engages the life of the spirit. We are born dreamers, and sift this world through our imaginations. It is vital that we keep the arts — the fountain of imagination and the well of intellectual and emotional response — part of the social and public policy on behalf of all dreamers, from age 2 to age 102.

Arts Participation: The Greying of America

by Andrea Sherman, Ph.D.

Intergenerational Specialist, Mill Street Loft

As America ages, we are witnessing an altered concept of age, one that includes surprising possibilities and uncharted territories — “a landscape without a map.” Adventure has become a new metaphor for age. As Betty Friedan suggests, age allows us to pioneer and explore new horizons for society and our communities. (It is not surprising so many older adults travel.) Creativity is another emerging metaphor — creating new possibilities so that we age with integrity.

We are on the brink of an unprecedented time in America's history. By the year 2030, 28 percent of the population will be over 60, and the number of those over 85 will triple. This “age wave” of older adults is influenced by three demographic trends: 1.) The baby boomers are aging — those over 65 will increase to 20 percent by the year 2030, hastening the Aging of America; 2.) Americans are living longer lives than ever before — life expectancy has risen from 47 to 75 years; and 3.) We have shifted from a birthing to an aging culture. In numbers, there will be nearly twice as many older adults in 2030 (70 million) as there are today (32 million). This “population revolution” presents an extraordinary opportunity and challenge for arts organizations, artists, and aging communities.

What are some of the specific ways in which the arts can be involved in this age shift? Here are just a few:

1. *The arts can help us understand and define aging, used as a vehicle to explore the “conversation” about what it means to grow old through writing workshops, forums, murals, theater and dance.*
2. *The arts offer the opportunity for self-expression amidst loss, for achievement and re-engagement amidst voids and uncertainty.* Many older adults face frequent loss in their lives — jobs, health, spouses, friends, leadership positions or income.
3. *The arts can provide ample opportunities for lifelong learning and service to others.* Older adults have increased leisure time with their unprecedented longer lives. Volunteerism enriches the quality of life for older adults. Of the 43 percent of all Americans between the ages of 67 and 74 who volunteer their time and talent, 36 percent of these are age 75 and older.
4. *Arts organizations can expect to have older adults participate and need arts programming.* With increased leisure time, older adults are increasingly becoming consumers and users of services.
5. *The arts can benefit from people’s contributions and resources.* Older adults are creators, mentors, teachers, tutors and advisors, sharing the wisdom that they have gained through a lifetime of experience. As role models, they show us how to age creatively by sharing their unique perspectives on life and teach artists what it is like to grow old.

Throughout this *Monographs*, experts in the arts and aging field discuss and describe a myriad of programs, policy issues and partnerships across the country. They discuss various collaborations with local and state arts agencies, the National Endowment for the Arts, local Offices for Aging, social service organizations, hospitals, and other community-based organizations. Funding possibilities are interwoven throughout each section. The publication concludes with a resource list of key organizations, books, and Internet information.

Yes, we are on the threshold of a powerful and challenging time — an “age wave” — where new paradigms for creative aging continue to be developed.

The arts play a vital role to help us age creatively and with dignity.

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Arts Programs Uniting Generations

by Susan Perlstein

Executive Director, Elders Share the Arts (ESTA)

Today, with the greying of America and with diminishing economic resources for the social and educational needs of both young and old, inter-generational creative arts programs have proven to be an inspiring and effective way to build community. In trying to develop mutual understanding, and community connections, these programs have become an important vehicle for linking generations and cultures.

Through visual arts, drama, music, dance and oral history, young and old celebrate culture and rebuild communities. Young and old learn, share experiences, practice new skills, cooperate, gain respect, and practice teamwork as they problem-solve together. Creative expression fosters self-esteem, pride, joy, and a sense of accomplishment.

The Elements of Intergenerational Arts Partnerships

All art partnerships involve bringing “the team” to the table. Administrators and program coordinators from youth and senior agencies must be involved in the planning process. Intergenerational programs run smoothly when there is one lead-organization, and the lines of accountability and responsibility are clear. The initiating organization is often responsible for fundraising. Since the success of the program depends as much on careful planning as on inspiration and artistic implementation, each team member’s responsibilities should be classified. Age awareness training for youth, elders, and participating artists is also essential for a successful intergenerational program, and ice-breakers can be used to foster vital connections among participants.

What follows is a sample of such successful intergenerational arts partnerships.

Model Intergenerational Arts Programs

■ Mill Street Loft

Mill Street Loft, a nationally recognized, not-for-profit, multi-arts educational center located in Poughkeepsie, N.Y., is committed to bringing creative educational and

culturally-enriching programs to children and older adults throughout the Hudson River Valley region.



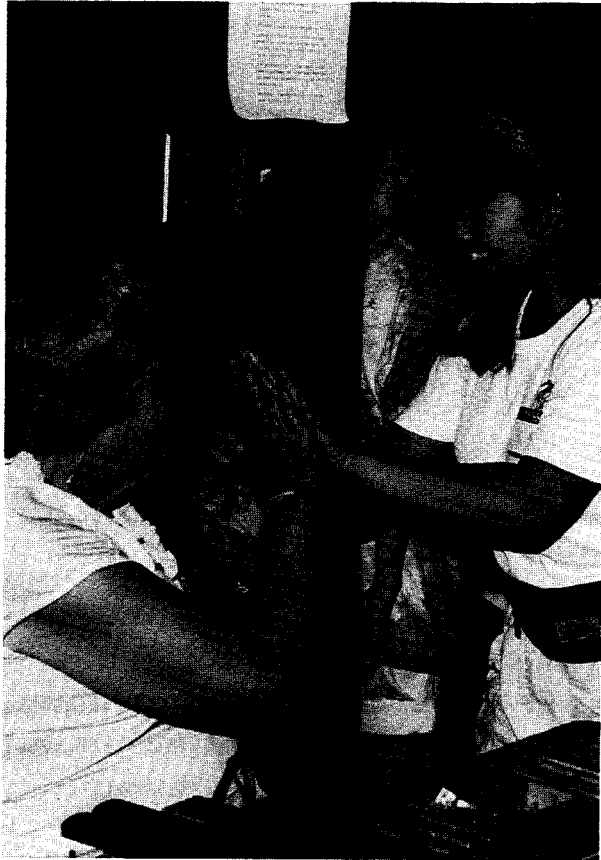
Intergenerational drama with the Building Bridges program of Mill Street Loft, Poughkeepsie, N.Y.

Mill Street Loft's Multi-Arts Educational Center was designed to offer a variety of arts and enrichment programs year-round to people of all ages and abilities. The building is fully accessible and dedicated to promoting meaningful communication and interdependence between generations.

Using the arts to "bridge the gap," these intergenerational programs have

helped build a renewed sense of pride and community. Programs also are offered at local schools, community centers, senior citizen housing projects, and nursing homes. *Seniors Go to Art Camp*, the *Intergenerational Chorus*, *Folk Arts*, *Life Stage Theater*, *Oral Histories*, *Connections*, *Building Bridges*, *Totems*, and *Project ABLE* are some of Mill Street Loft's key intergenerational programs, two of which are highlighted below.

Building Bridges, an intergenerational after school arts program, licensed in 1992, received its initial start-up funds from the IBM Corporation. In August 1994, it received national recognition in *Child Magazine* as one of the nation's 10 best after-school child-care programs. Adults 55 and older work as mentors, professional artists, program assistants, and volunteers. In a family-like environment children ages 6 to 12 and older adults have made new friends, explored diverse and age-related issues through a unique hands-on, multi-arts program that has included music, creative movement, drama, story-



Intergenerational music activities with the Building Bridges Program of Mill Street Loft, Poughkeepsie, N.Y.

telling, and the visual arts. An *Intergenerational Arts Festival* has emerged as an outgrowth of the program, and funding by American Express and the New York State Council on the Arts has helped to make this an annual event.

Project ABLE (*Arts for Basic Education, Life Skills, and Entrepreneurship*), begun in 1994, is an arts-driven, job skills training program for economically disadvantaged and at-risk city youth ages 14 to 21. An intergenerational component was created with blind older adults from the local Retired Senior Volunteer Program. Youths were trained in age and disability awareness, as well as oral history interviewing. In 1995, Project ABLE initiated an Inter-generational Mentoring Component linking youth with adult mentors from the local business community. Recently, an intergenerational rap group has brought together a diverse group of older adults and at-risk youth. The common sharing ground of music, rhythm and words, has communicated a universal

message to people of all ages. Project ABLE has received federal grants from JTPA, USDA, CDBG, as well as grants from the NYS Division for Youth, the United Way and Area Fund of Dutchess County, the Drumcliff, Dyson, Gannett and Berkshire/Taconic Foundations, and corporate support and grants from the Dutchess Co. Youth Bureau, Dutchess Co. Arts Council, and the NYS Council on the Arts.

■ Elders Share the Arts

Elders Share the Arts (ESTA) is a nationally recognized community arts organization located in Brooklyn, N.Y. ESTA is dedicated to validating personal histories, honoring diverse traditions, and connecting generations and cultures through living history arts programs. Through this unique synthesis of oral history and the creative arts, ESTA's staff of professional artists works with old and young to transform their life stories into dramatic, literary, and visual presentations that celebrate community life.

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Generating Community, an intergenerational arts partnership program, consists of a weekly workshop program that brings together seniors in nursing homes, community centers, and senior centers with pre-school to high-school aged youths. Each program lasts about 30 sessions. ESTA sets up and trains the partnership team, and participant groups meet two hours once a week to turn their stories into theater, storytelling, dance performances, murals, paintings, journal writing, or poetry. A public presentation of the work — usually as a performance, sometimes as booklets presented as part of a festival — is the crucial community-building element of the project. The presentation may be staged at the school, the senior center, or a central public place, such as a museum or library, or at several locations. ESTA produces living history festivals each year that bring together all of the intergenerational presenting groups.

Funding for each partnership team comes from foundation, government and local grass roots fundraising. Each 10 month program costs about \$15,000 the first year, and less in succeeding years, depending on shared resources and in-kind services. The essential costs are for the coordinator, trainers, the teaching artist, and materials. During the first year, the partnership team analyzes its resources and prepares a continuation budget based on who can offer in-kind contributions and where pockets of funding to support the artist can come from. Often the school can identify such resources (e.g. parent's associations, local donors, local politicians or community development corporations.)

The *Pearls of Wisdom* are elder ESTA storytellers who spin original tales of courage and triumph, telling stories that must be told. Each of these older adult performers represents New York City's diverse and culturally rich older community. The Pearls present their lives in the form of humorous and compassionate stories, playlets, and songs that captivate, educate, and delight a wide range of audiences. The Pearls perform and conduct storytelling workshops in schools and other community settings.

ESTA receives funds from the New York State Council on the Arts, New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, local arts councils, the National

*"Elders — they are
our wisdom, our
ways, our history
walking on two
legs, finally arrived
at fourth quarter
of life — the
Giveback Time."*

*Joan Henry
Tsalagi/Nde singer
and youth
counselor
(Cherokee/Jicarilla
Apache)*

Endowment for the Arts and also private funding. It also contracts with St. Alban's Veterans Administration Long Term Care Facility for a hospital-wide life review/arts therapy program extending to the long-term care unit, adult day-care/health-care unit, and the behavioral management unit. ESTA has an extensive fee-for-service training program unit in hospitals, nursing homes, health-care facilities, schools, colleges, and shelters. Their model programs have been replicated nationally and internationally.

■ **Liz Lerman's Dance Exchange**

This group, based in Washington, D.C., is a touring company of professional dancers renowned as the first and premier dance company of its kind.

The Liz Lerman Dance Exchange began in 1975 when she created "Woman of the Clear Vision," a dance about her mother's death that featured professional dancers and older adults from a Washington, D.C., senior center. Currently the troupe is multi-cultural and cross-generational with ages ranging from 26 to 73. It has created over 50 dance/theater works and performed for thousands of community events.

Based on the belief that dance is a birthright, each company member not only performs but teaches community residencies and professional training to inspire all kinds of people to dance. Creative workshops are taught in nursing homes, senior centers and senior residencies, prisons, and corporations, as well as to hospitalized children and adults. Lerman says her work is "about people dancing, not dancers dancing."

Funding for the company is multi-faceted. Major funding streams are in the arts, many of which include the arts in a broader social mission. Foundations such as the Ruth Mott, Prince Charitable Trust, Meyer, and the Foundation for the National Capitol Region have all supported the company. The District of Columbia Commission on the Arts and Humanities, NEA, AT&T, Dancing in the Streets, and *The Washington Post* have also supported the Exchange. The company has been able to gain financial support through its unique approach to human issues and mixing dynamic ideas in a new context to support cutting age issues. It is noteworthy that the Ruth Mott

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Foundation did not fund the company until it partnered the two issues of older people and HIV/AIDS; the synergy of the partnership attracted broader support.

■ **Full Circle Theater Troupe**

Center for Intergenerational Learning at Temple University

The Center for Intergenerational Learning in Philadelphia provides a wealth of intergenerational training, performances, retreats and technical assistance across the country.

Full Circle Theater is an intergenerational ensemble of teens and elders that began in 1983 when Executive Director Nancy Henkin brought age-related issues to a socio-dramatist who worked with teens. Early funding came from the Philadelphia Area Agency on Aging to create an intergenerational troupe to provide interactive performances on many themes, including ageism and the generation gap. Through the intergenerational theater troupe and an annual learning retreat, the Center continues to work to dispel stereotypes and to promote understanding across the ages.

The Full Circle company has 50 to 60 actors aged 14 to 86 representing diverse ethnic and socioeconomic groups. They perform up to 150 times a year, and employ a full-time director and administrator. Most recently, funding has come through a family foundation to train hospice workers. The troupe has shifted from short- to long-term funding partnerships and has raised funds for specific topical projects including AIDS, violence, and dying.

The field of intergenerational arts programming is a growing and exciting one. As Grey Panther leader Maggie Kuhn said, "the linkage of the historical perspective of age with the energy of youth can change the world."

Opening Doors to Lifelong Learning in the Arts

By Paula Terry, Coordinator

Office for Accessibility, National Endowment for the Arts

"There is a need to better educate the field concerning the value of the arts and the humanities for, by, and with older persons. One critical theory for meeting this need is networking among the arts, the humanities and aging organizations."

Fernando M.
Torres-Gil
Assistant Secretary
for Aging
Administration on
Aging
U.S. Department
of Health and
Human Services

Older Americans are an economic force, an educated force, and, potentially, an artistically inclined force. Unfortunately, there are still many organizations serving older adults that are unaware of how the arts may benefit their constituents and many art groups that are not actively concerned with opening up their programs and reaching out to this large and burgeoning population. The need for increased networking between the arts and aging fields was among the recommendations submitted to the 1995 White House Conference on Aging. With their partnership abilities, local arts agencies can play an important role in achieving this goal.

While doors of a theater or museum are theoretically open to everyone, some people enter more frequently than others. The Arts Endowment supported 1982, 1985, and 1992 **Surveys of Public Participation in the Arts** to track and inventory attendance figures based on 12,000 telephone and in-person interviews with adult Americans. The Endowment's 1996 Research Report, *Age and Arts Participation*, analyzes how audience age affects participation of classical music, opera, ballet, musicals, jazz, plays and art museums over a 10-year period. *Surveys show that, regardless of income, there is an overall substantial decline in arts participation for people born prior to 1946. These figures suggest that older adults face barriers to cultural activities. Clearly we must do something about this.*

Arts organizations in partnership with community agencies are taking steps to encourage older Americans to participate in the arts by addressing potential barriers such as transportation, ticket prices, and time and location of arts programming.

■ Addressing Financial Barriers

Financial barriers affect people of all ages. Although many older adults are in the highest economic categories, many are also living below the poverty level. Advertising discounted or free admission "for people on fixed/low



Beginning at 10:30 a.m., Mornings at Stage Center features a troupe of seniors presenting dramatic readings of poems, essays, and stories. The Arts Council of Oklahoma City sponsors this a.m. series that includes theatre and music performances and opens each event with coffee and donuts.

incomes," rather than specifying a particular group, such as students or retired persons, and a non-investigative approach are recommended. For example, the **Iowa Arts Council**, the **Iowa Department of Human Resources (DoHR)**, and **local arts agencies**, with support from the NEA, created the Iowa Cultural Audience Recruitment and Development (I CARD) program. Low-income individuals and families sign up for the I CARD at their local DoHR office. The card allows them free or substantially discounted admission to events sponsored by participating arts

groups. LAAs help manage and market this successful effort that now includes thousands of families. It received the National Association of Community Action Agencies' 1996 award for "outstanding contributions to rural areas."

The **Theater Development Fund, Inc.**, in New York City, provides direct mailings advertising discounted tickets to people, including older adults on low/fixed incomes, and **Senior Arts Inc.**, in Albuquerque, N.M., provides free performances and workshops in music, dance, theater, literature, and a wide variety of Hispanic and Native-American crafts for older adults throughout the city.

■ Addressing Logistical Barriers: Transportation, Time, and Location

Addressing logistical barriers includes assuring that affordable, accessible transportation is available for activities. The time of day is another important consideration. Many older adults prefer daytime scheduling for a number of reasons, including crime and low night vision that may limit their ability to travel in the evenings.

The **Arts Council of Oklahoma City** targeted older adults through its Stage Center Theater by offering daytime performances. They organized a Read-

ers Theater Troupe, with support from the **State Arts Council of Oklahoma**, composed of talented older adults who perform many of their own stories in the theater and senior centers. The **North Carolina Arts Council** has two mobile Arts Trucks, mainly in rural areas, co-sponsored by LAAs, for one- to two-month periods. For example, the Beaufort County Arts Council parked the Arts Truck near its senior center, and older adults worked with three artists in wood sculpture, batik, and fiber art for two months. The CineSol Latino Film Festival in Harlingen, Texas, works in partnership with the local county aging program, Amigos Del Valle, Inc., to involve older adults in its festival. Amigos Del Valle advertises the Festival and furnishes free transportation to older adults. In return, the Festival provides free videos of its art to 19 area senior centers.

The **Boston Symphony Orchestra, Inc.**, provides daytime concerts for 500 older people who live in the inner city, as well as free transportation and reduced tickets for older adults with low incomes to attend performances at Tanglewood and Symphony Hall. **Appalshop** in Whitesburg, Ky., takes its roadside theater into rural areas, bringing together older adults and school children to share stories and pass on cultural traditions. The **International Museum of Photography** at George Eastman House in Rochester, N.Y., targets older audiences by presenting daytime matinees of restored films from its archives, including silent films with full orchestra, and the **Nevada Symphony Orchestra** in Las Vegas offers free transportation to its Saturday morning concert series.

■ Addressing Architectural and Programmatic Barriers

Architectural and programmatic barriers are against the law, as specified in the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act. Many older adults with sensory loss or limited mobility are benefitting from accommodations provided by arts groups, including assistive listening systems for hard-of-hearing individuals. *Design for Accessibility: An Art Administrator's Guide*, produced by the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies in partnership with the NEA, is the most comprehensive arts access publication to-date. Its Arts Accessibility Checklist (page 25) provides guidelines on the requirements, for example: integrated and dispersed seating in all assembly areas (although

many designers continue to produce front or back row seating exclusively and even seating that separates individuals from non-disabled family or friends); audio description for people with low or no vision, the appropriate height for display cases so that people of short stature and those who use wheelchairs may view it; and large print labeling.

State, regional, and many LAAs have a designated staff member who serves as 504/ADA coordinator to assist art groups with accessibility. For example, the **Broward Cultural Affairs Division** in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., was one of six LAAs that worked with **Very Special Arts Florida** and **Florida's Division of Cultural Affairs** to convene one-day access seminars throughout the state for arts groups. The next regional access symposium will be convened in September 1997 in Milwaukee, Wis., by **Arts Midwest** for its nine-state region.

■ Lifelong Learning

Lifelong learning, the theme of most programs cited in this *Monographs*, is a goal of many arts groups. Older citizens should have the same opportunities as younger people.

Another LAA that addresses lifelong learning is the **Batesville Area Arts Council** in Arkansas. Through its "Forever Young at Heart" program, seven artists work with older adults on a wide variety of projects, including murals for senior centers, theater activities, and a writer's group. In one project with fifth and sixth graders, the writers' group conducted research on dress, music, and art of Argentina that culminated in an intergenerational Argentina festival. This initiative is jointly funded by the Arts Council and the **White River Area Agency on Aging**. One artist is supported by the **Corporation for National Service**.

The **Center for Women & Their Work** in Austin, Texas, holds master classes and performances in senior and community centers; the **University of Illinois Krannert Center for the Performing Arts** in Urbana conducts an intergenerational program involving college students and individuals with the university's Elder Hostel program; and **Japantown Art & Media Work-**

shop (JAM) in San Francisco conducts classes, such as ceramics and silk screening, and provides studio space for older student artists. Begun in 1974, it has grown into one of JAM's most popular programs among the Japanese community.

"On the one hand, older artists, through their creative works, have historically made remarkable contributions to the culture of their societies. On the other hand, art often serves as a creative vehicle that helps many individuals cope with loss in later life."

*Gene D. Cohen,
M.D., Ph.D.
President-Elect
The Gerontological
Society of America*

Outreach by arts groups to the approximately five percent of older adults who live in long-term care facilities may be the only opportunity these older residents have to experience quality art. The most effective programs are those that are on-going and that involve older individuals in the programming. The Iowa Arts Council makes it possible for artists to teach art at adult day-care centers in Cedar Rapids and Newton. The **Institute of Puerto Rican Culture** supports a wide variety of arts programs for older adults, including craft workshops in the Rivera Elder Citizens Home in Moca, P.R. For the past six years, the **Rhode Island State Council on the Arts** has supported the Alliance for Better Nursing Home Care's arts program, in which a visual artist teaches residents in six nursing homes. This includes inter-generational arts classes with Spanish-speaking school children where older adults help children learn English while they create together. Exhibitions of their art are held in libraries, banks, and in the State House, attended by the Governor.

Grass Roots Art and Community Efforts (GRACE) helps older adults in rural Vermont develop their talent through weekly workshops in community centers, nursing homes, and the homes of those who choose to work at home; **Los Reyes de Albuquerque** of New Mexico includes an intergenerational group that performs traditional Hispanic songs and music at senior meal sites and in nursing homes; **Elders Share the Arts** in Brooklyn, N.Y., has "Pearls of Wisdom," a touring ensemble of multicultural older storytellers who create and perform original plays in nursing homes; and **Artswatch** in Lexington, Ky., sponsors **Eldersprites**, a troupe of older women who perform and lead such creative arts as dance and storytelling with older adults in senior centers and nursing homes.

■ Policy and Leadership Initiatives

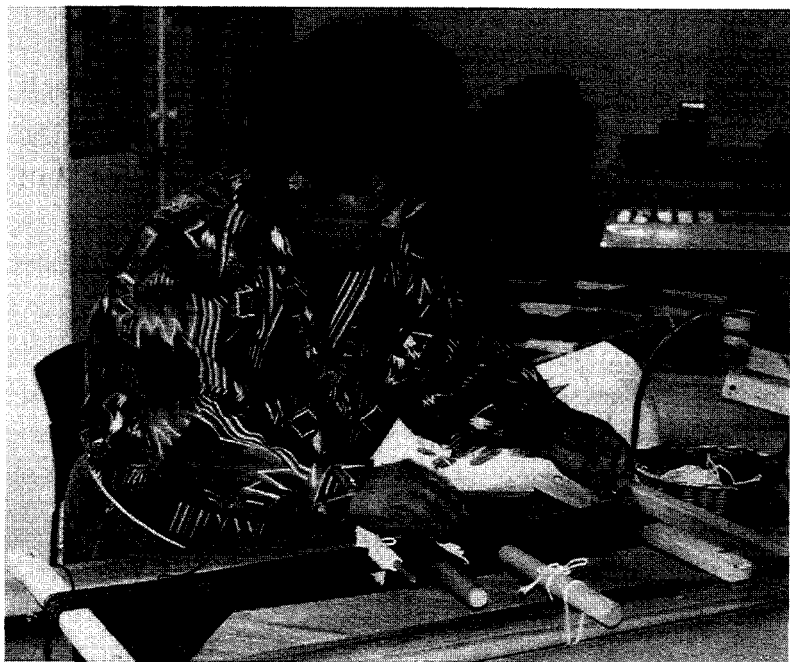
Although numerous arts groups are aggressively targeting older adults,

many arts communities have been slow to respond. Much remains to be done, yet many opportunities for growth exist if we reach out and open up programs to this ever-growing population. For-profit businesses across the country recognize this, and are attending to the concerns and needs of older Americans by using realistic, positive images of aging in advertising.

The National Endowment for the Arts is actively engaged in making the arts available to all Americans. While the public is only beginning to realize that the “third age” of one’s lifespan offers rich possibilities for growth and enrichment, the NEA continues to demonstrate how exposure to and involvement in the arts contribute to the quality of life for all persons, regardless of age.

To impact aging policy at the national level, the Arts Endowment joined with both the 1981 and 1995 **White House Conferences on Aging** (WHCoA) to develop interagency agreements with the National Endowment for Humanities and the Administration on Aging of the Department of Health and Human Services. These four federal agencies worked in partnership, convening WHCoA policy conferences to develop recommendations on the arts and the humanities involving older adults that became part of both White House Conferences’ working papers. Jane Alexander, the first NEA Chairman ever invited to keynote a WHCoA, spoke to the 2,600 delegates concerning the importance of the arts for, by, and with older Americans.

The Endowment’s on-going leadership effort to promote **Universal Design** — a design process that goes beyond “special” features to create designs that accommodate people of all abilities throughout their lifespan — began in 1990 with a universal design forum. Since that time, the Endowment has supported: the first national conference on designing for the lifespan, *Universal Design: Access to Daily Living*, convened in New York City in May 1992; advertisement and distribution of *Toward Universal Design*, a video that introduces the concept in products, buildings and spaces; and a model by Adaptive Environments, Inc., in Boston, that integrates universal design principles into schools of design, documented in *Strategies for Teaching Universal Design*. We are currently working with Universal Designers and Con-



Senior Arts of Albuquerque, N.M., hires professional artists to perform and teach challenging and culturally diverse arts to elders in public senior centers. Above is a student in a Pueblo weaving class.

sultants, Inc. in Rockville, Md., to document exemplars of universal design in the fields of architecture, industrial design, interior design, landscape architecture, and graphic design. The images and text will be widely disseminated, including on the Internet.

■ Older Artists

Several years ago, the Endowment supported a public radio series, *I'm Too Busy to Talk: Conversations With Creative People Over Seventy*. Producer Connie Goodman interviewed 13 older working artists, including actress Mary

Martin, authors May Sarton and Irving Stone, and Jacob Lawrence, visual artist and former member of the National Council on the Arts.

Mr. Lawrence said:

"The older artists I know are more stimulating, more exciting and have more to say with age . . . much more. As I have grown older, I think my work has become more complex. I see more, I am more aware of things. There is an ongoing development taking place. I feel that I have matured and am now at my peak."

State, regional, and local arts councils continue to provide the major public support for artists. For example, the **Utah Arts Council** in Salt Lake City is supporting a touring exhibition of older artists' work called "Eighty Something." **State apprenticeship programs** that bring older traditional master artists together with young apprentices for periods of intensive, hands-on instruction, have grown from an initial three states in the pilot phase to 38 active states and territories in 1996, most supported in part by the Arts Endowment. During this 10-year period, more than 2,500 apprenticeships nationwide have represented a wide variety of cultures and genres, including old-time fiddling in West Virginia, Athabascan fiddling in Alaska, His-

panic santos carving in Colorado, canoe carving in Guam, African-American tap dance in Pennsylvania, and Okinawan classical dance in California. Despite reduced funds and Congressional mandates, the Endowment is still able to provide a limited number of awards to individual artists through the American Jazz Masters Fellowships, the National Heritage Fellowships, and Creative Writing Fellowships. Two of these categories recognize lifetime artistic achievement and, consequently, the recipients tend to be older artists.

America does not like to look at aging, but attitudes are thankfully changing with increased exposure to older adults and knowledge about aging. Attitudinal barriers can only be overcome if every other barrier is addressed, so that older adults will have opportunities to fully participate in ALL that an organization has to offer. The focus must be inclusion, universal design, and, as renowned violinist Itzhak Perlman encourages, "access with dignity."

Arts and Health Care for Older Adults

by Andrea Sherman, Ph.D.

Intergenerational Specialist, Mill Street Loft

Creativity and expression through the arts are vital to our health and well-being through all stages of life, but as we age and experience a sensory decline or "thinning of life," we need stronger stimuli to activate our senses. The arts can provide a vehicle for older adults to be re-stimulated and actively engaged in life, as illustrated by a variety of recent programs across the country.

Museum One uses the arts to inspire and teach older adults in nursing homes, medical centers, retirement centers, and adult day care centers. Begun in Washington, D.C., by art historian Joan Hart in 1982, this organization has established a training program for staff members in a variety of health care settings. Art appreciation courses and workshops are brought to older adults on topics that range from Renaissance to Modern Art, and from Michelangelo to Grandma Moses.

"The one link that bonds us all together; young and old — is the universal language of the Arts. The Arts tap our individual uniqueness; allowing the vitality of youth and the wisdom of age to showcase our oneness, foster self-expression, and rebuild a shared sense of community."

*Carole Wolf
Executive Director,
Mill Street Loft*

In the courses, parallels are drawn between the lives of the older adults and the lives of artists who created great work while in chronic pain in their later years, including Matisse who, with diminishing vision and severe intestinal disorders, created from his wheelchair and Monet, who continued painting into his 80's following two cataract operations. Visual arts appreciation leads participants to hands-on art workshops where they can express their individual creativity on paper or canvas, using paint, charcoal, and colored paper. Techniques and materials are adapted for those with Parkinson's or Alzheimer's disease. The last phase of Museum One's "Creating for Life" program includes creative movement and music explorations.

Ongoing relationships have been established with museums such as the National Museum of American Art (Smithsonian Institution), whose Education Department has provided docents to take older adults on tours, often based on material that has been previously discussed at the senior facility by Museum One teachers. Most recently, Museum One has provided educational materials, such as slides and videos, and independent study courses for activity directors, recreation therapists, and volunteers who lead older adults audiences.

Museum One began as a neighborhood organization, initially funded by a women's service club and the local neighborhood government or what is known in D.C. as an advisory neighborhood commission. Additional subsequent funding has been provided by the Cafritz Foundation and Phillip Graham Fund, as well as the D.C. Humanities Council, the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities and Public Policy, and the Montgomery County Humanities Commission.

Very Special Arts Oregon, funded by a state grant, has piloted a program for residents with Alzheimer's at St. Aidan's Place, a model respite center in Salem, Ore. The arts are used to stimulate long-term memories and refocus behavior while providing positive social interaction for participants. A multitude of arts such as silk screening, paper marbling, weaving and poetry are led by artists two afternoons a week, with a total of 25 sessions of arts

activities led by 15 artists who have received prior training in Alzheimer's disease and dementia by a health care organization.

In its first year, the program reached two dozen participants between the ages of 62 and 97 with a staff/participant ratio of 1:2 or 1:3. The pilot program was so successful that it has been expanded to three additional care facilities. "The Alzheimers and Arts Program has expanded our vision of what people with dementia can do and enjoy . . . and to break the monotony of long and confined days with simple activities that bring joy and peace," states Kathy Ramsten, director of an adult foster home that participates in the program. Julie Gottlieb, Executive Director of Very Special Arts Oregon, explains that the "value of the program lies in the dignity that it gives participants." The program hopes eventually to reach people with Alzheimers disease who are cared for at home.

Funding for the program has been diverse, from both community foundations and the diocese. The Oregon Community Foundation funded the training booklet, and the M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust has contributed for programming. The Episcopal Archdiocese provided operating funding, and the Legacy Good Samaritan, a hospital management corporation, gave funds to establish alternative pilot programs to design quality activities for respite care.

For those interested in replicating the program, Very Special Arts Oregon has published *I Can Create: Arts Programming for People with Alzheimers and Related Disorders*. The booklet includes guidelines for starting a comprehensive arts program at an adult care facility.

The field of arts and health care also encompasses performing arts groups with older adults or intergenerational casts who use the arts to address vital health care issues.

Artswatch, an artist-in-residence program for elders in Louisville, Ky., has inspired the seven-woman acting troupe *Eldersprites*. The interdisciplinary company tours throughout the region, particularly at facilities serving older



The arts program at Connecticut Hospice provides patients and families opportunities for creative expression. Arts Coordinator Dorothy Powers assists a patient with a collage.

adults. Performance issues that relate to aging, such as arthritis, alcoholism and diversity, are addressed. Funding has come from the Kentucky Arts Council, the City of Louisville, private foundations, arts agencies and the Louisville Board of Education.

The Connecticut Hospice Program is another exceptional arts program for older adults. The program makes the arts as indispensable a service as nursing

or dietary. Art activities range from bedside art to evening concerts, from homecare arts to ongoing exhibits in the main gallery. Hospice artists complete a program orientation to the Hospice and have direct involvement with the patients and families at bedside and are a core of the caregiving team. Above all, the artist is considered a team member in the overall profile of caregiving, enabling people to enter the "pain and suffering as well as the ecstasy of life and create something new out of it."

The Hospice arts program was built into the health care system as law through collaboration with the state. The mandated licensing regulation has several implications: 1.) The arts are considered in the same light as other services (i.e., pharmacy, medical) benefitting the patient and families; 2.) All arts visits are recorded in patient charts and discussed as a part of the patient assessment; and 3.) This inclusion of the arts into a hospice care program can serve as a model for other health care providers.

In 1979, the National Endowment for the Arts funded the early planning and implementation of the program. In 1980, the Connecticut Commission on the Arts funded fees for artists, and additional funding came from the New Haven Fund. Continued funding comes from private donors; sponsors of many musical and performing artists, such as the musicians union; Yale School of Music; and corporate funding through City Spirit Artists, a local

arts organization. The Friends of the Connecticut Hospice, an auxiliary organization, has designated the program as a beneficiary of its fundraising efforts.

The Hospice Music program was founded by New Haven professional musicians to offer hospice patients and families opportunities to enjoy monthly live music concerts. The Connecticut Songwriters Association sponsored a party to celebrate the 10th anniversary of their organization and the Hospice Arts program.

The philosophy behind the program is based on the belief that dying is as natural an event as being born. The arts are not taught in a traditional art therapy approach, but are taught from the standpoint of the arts as arts. The product that is created is of special significance. Patients can create a product with the skills that they have, so that the dying person can “leave something to remember me by” — a qualitative legacy.

These selected programs illustrate that the creative arts contribute to the health and well-being of older adults. Through arts appreciation in nursing homes, arts workshops for people with Alzheimers, performances about health issues, and a mandated arts program for people who are dying, the arts are indeed providing older adults opportunities for health.

Arts, Legislation and Policy Considerations for Older Americans

by Bob Blancato

1995 Director, White House Conference on Aging

The arts and aging are a very crucial mix. Art brings communities together and provides older adults with a feeling of a positive, healthy aging process, rather than a feeling of being aged. The arts involving older Americans promotes freedom and independence and encourages involvement on behalf of the older populations. As a nation, we should value the fact that older adults are both worthy recipients of public arts agency support and valuable

resources for arts institutions. Many steps in legislation have been taken to further the progress of arts and aging policies.

■ Older Americans Act

Although the **Older Americans Act** does not yet address the arts for arts sake, it does include arts therapy. Title IV, Section 422 of the Act recognizes and supports programs to advance the understanding of the “efficacy and benefits of providing music therapy, art therapy, or dance-movement therapy to older adults” through projects that study and demonstrate the provisions of this type of therapy to older individuals who are institutionalized or who are at risk of being institutionalized. It provides music, art, and dance therapy in nursing homes, hospitals, rehabilitation centers, hospices, and senior centers, and Title III provides the same to disease prevention and health promotion service programs, in-home service programs, multi-generational activities, and supportive services, along with gerontological training to therapists.

■ White House Conference on Aging

The first White House Conference on Aging (WhCOA) held in 1961 provided the basis for what became the Older Americans Act of 1965, and a key priority in the 1995 WHCoA was its strong reaffirmation for the entire Older Americans Act. White House Conferences on Aging serve as catalysts for the development of aging policy from decade to decade, and the 1995 version was no different. The main principles of the 1995 WhCOA were:

- to value independence
- to recognize interdependence
- to ensure the quality of life of all Americans as they age

The 1995 White House Conference on Aging directly addressed the arts and humanities, a result of an interagency initiative developed by the National Endowment on the Arts with the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Administration on Aging of the Department of Health and Human Services, and the WHCoA. Their goal was to make quality arts and humanities opportunities more responsive and available to older adults and to increase

the sensitivity of professionals and practitioners in the field of aging to the potential of cultural programs involving older persons. The centerpiece of the agreement was a **national symposium on "The Arts, The Humanities and Older Americans,"** convened April 10-11, 1995, by the National Council on Aging. The series of deliberations that followed resulted in policy recommendations which assured that the arts and humanities were on the May 1-5, 1995, White House Conference on Aging's agenda as a quality-of-life issue. On the federal, state and local levels, it was recommended that the arts and humanities become more inclusive on a cross-generational basis.

■ Future of Arts and Aging Programming

What is the future for the arts and aging? On the surface, the major federal programs which promote older adults' involvement in the arts face uncertain futures. This begins with the Endowments themselves. Title IV of the Older Americans Act itself is in serious difficulty in terms of funding. More and more, it appears that the future rests with the development of state programs, as well as public/private/philanthropic partnerships that promote greater awareness and appreciation for arts and the aging.

It is important that advocates for arts and aging work to broaden their advocacy range. For example, a strong message from the 1995 WHCoA was its call for increased long-term care as part of our future health care policy, with special emphasis on home and community-based long-term care. Clearly, many of the programs linking the arts and older adults are community-based and contribute to the well-being of seniors.

Who are some of the **key players** to bring to the table if arts groups want to create a "Task Force on Arts and Aging" within your community? They might include your local Office for the Aging, State Office of the Aging, senior center representative, nursing home administrator, Mental Health Association, Board of Education staff, and a university or college staff. Several national organizations, some of whom have local chapters, could also be included, such as the American Association for Retired Persons (AARP), the National Council on Aging (NCOA), Council of Senior Centers, Generations



In Providence, R.I., schools and community groups bring children into nursing facilities for on-going visits with the residents. The arts are integrated into this inter-generational program of the Alliance for Better Nursing Home Care.

United, state-wide Intergenerational Coalitions and networks, Alzheimer's Association, and the Administration on Aging. Potential federal partners in both policy and funding initiatives involve the Office of Community Services, the National Institute on Aging, the Department of Education, and the Department of Interior's National Park Service.

The arts are appreciated by all generations, and any future aging policy should be developed with many generations in mind. The WHCoA succeeded in redefining aging and aging policy in a more inter-generational context, and advocates for the arts and aging must promote future programs in this fashion as well. The formulation of effective policy mechanisms requires great imagination and cost evaluation, but the motivation to devise such mechanisms must come from a commitment to the well being of our older population.

Checklist for Including Older Adults in Arts Programming

- Accessible and reasonable transportation, car pools, covered drop-off
- Scheduling — daytime, early evening, month/season
- Reasonable ticket prices, group rates, free tickets, discount coupons
- Membership cards, special subscription rates
- Previews and orientations that target older adults
- Network with aging organizations
- Survey and market to target groups, including use of access symbols and signage
- Structural access: ramps, path of travel to program
- Printed materials with alternate formats including large print, braille, cassette recording
- Accessible interior design, including work tables and rest rooms

- Accessible programming, including lighting and acoustic accommodations
- Incentives for participation, including receptions and refreshments

STEP BY STEP PROGRAMMING

How to Begin Involving Older Adults in the Arts

1. Identify local resources.
2. Develop program ideas — remember to include older adults in your planning.
3. Plan how to have older adults participate in your programs and in your audience.
4. Initiate a dialogue with the local Office of the Aging, a senior center, nursing home, adult day care center and with older adults in your community.
5. Maintain an intergenerational arts focus.
6. Include older adults on your board of directors.
7. Plan staff training in partnership with local aging organizations.
8. If intergenerational — conduct age awareness training for each age group.
9. Cross pollinate ideas.
10. Incorporate arts and aging ideas into your agendas.
11. Plan with access issues in mind — i.e., transportation, time of day, program accommodations.
12. Research local and national funding.
13. Publicize, document your program to arts groups and aging organizations.

■ Arts and Aging Resources

American Association of Museums and the Institute of Museum Services, and the NEA. The Accessible Museum, Washington, D.C., 1993. *Profiles 19 access model programs. Available for \$40 from the American Association of Museums Bookstore, 1225 Eye Street, NW, Suite 220, Washington, DC 20005.*

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National Endowment for the Arts and Barrier Free Environmental, Inc., The Arts and 504: A Handbook for Accessible Arts Programming. Washington, D.C., 1992. *Assists grantees in complying with access regulations. Available from the Government Printing Office, Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D.C. 20402. (\$6.50 each; orders of 100 or more receive a 25 percent discount.) Request stock # 035-000-00055-4.*

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■ Internet Resources on Aging

- <http://www.aoa.dhhs.gov/aoa/webres/craig.htm>

Includes over 175 direct links to other WWW sites on aging and is particularly strong on links to government agencies and organizations providing community services.

- <http://www.iog.wayne.edu>

Links a section of the Institute of Gerontology at Wayne State University with 75 sites, and is particularly strong on links to university and research sites on aging.

- <http://www.biostat.wustl.edu/alzheimer>

This is the Alzheimer-related WWW site, with direct links to 30 Alzheimer-related sites and over 30 Alzheimer-related gopher sites.

- <http://www.ice.net/~kstevens/ELDERWEB.HTM>

A consumer-oriented site, with direct links to approximately 35 Web sites plus hundreds of full-text documents.

- **Seniornet**

Phone: 415.750.5030; Fax: 415.750.5045

- **AARP Ageline Database**

(Fee for service database accessed through Dialog or BRS)

Phone: 202.434.2277 or 202.434.6231

- **Gerontological Society of America (GSA)**

(Has a publication, "Databases in Aging.") Phone: 202.842.1275

■ Organizations

Americans for the Arts, 927 15th St., NW, 12th Floor, Washington, DC 20005-2304; telephone: 202.371.2830.

Elders Share the Arts (ESTA), 57 Willoughby St., Brooklyn, NY 11201; telephone: 718.488.8565.

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Mill Street Loft: A Multi-Arts Educational Center, 20 Maple St., Poughkeepsie, NY 12601; telephone: 914.471.7477.

Museum One, 35 Dover Chester Road, Randolph, NJ 07869; telephone: 201.366.5148 or 1.800.524.1730.

National Council on the Aging, Inc. National Center on the Arts and Aging, 409 Third Street, SW, Washington, DC 20024; telephone: 202.479.1200.

National Endowment for the Arts, Office for AccessAbility, 1100 Pennsylvania Avenue, Washington, DC 20506; telephone: 202.682.5530; TDD#: 202.682.5496.

Society for Arts on Healthcare/Healing Through Art, c/o Aesthetics, Inc., 2900 4th Ave, Suite 100, San Diego, CA 92103; telephone: 619.683.7500.

Temple University, Center for Intergenerational Learning, 1601 North Broad Street, Room 206, Philadelphia, PA 19122; telephone: 215.204.6970. ▼

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