

Recommendations from Mini-Conference on Creativity and Aging in America

May 18-19, 2005

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Executive Summary

The National Endowment for the Arts, the AARP, the National Center for Creative Aging, and NAMM—the International Music Products Association worked together to sponsor the Mini-Conference on Creativity and Aging in America. Its purpose was to develop recommendations for the 2005 White House Conference on Aging. Convened May 18–19, 2005, at the National Endowment for the Arts in Washington, DC, the mini-conference focused on the importance and value of professional arts programming for, by, and with older Americans as a quality of life issue.

A select group of 44 leaders in the fields of aging, the arts, education, philanthropy, government, and research presented, discussed, and formulated recommendations on three issues important to older Americans: life-long learning and building community through the arts, designing for the lifespan, and the arts in healthcare.

The outcomes of the 2005 White House Conference on Aging, scheduled for December 11–14, will guide national aging policy over the next decade. This conference occurs every 10 years to make aging policy recommendations to the President and Congress, and to assist the public and private sectors in promoting dignity, health, independence, and economic security of current and future generations of older persons.

The mini-conference opened with remarks by Dana Gioia, chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, who discussed the necessity in the 21st century of reconnecting what the arts are to peoples' lives. Conversations with three accomplished artists followed: musician Roberto Martinez, dancer and storyteller Amatullah Saleem, and poet Samuel Menashe. Each shared his or her respective life experiences with participants. Martinez expressed his strong belief that the arts are very beneficial to older adults, based on his personal experiences as an older musician who performs in institutional settings. Saleem spoke passionately about the importance of older adults being a “natural resource” for the community. She expressed her sense of “standing on the shoulders of great black artists” and her need to be the shoulders on which future generations would stand. And Menashe noted his lifelong dedication to his craft and accolades that have come to him only in recent years, adding, “Poetry has been a pretty good workout...Being a poet has made me a pretty spry old man.”

Other presentations included:

- The history of the Older Americans Act, which is reauthorized every 10 years following the White House Conference on Aging, by Susan Perlstein, founder and executive director of the National Center for Creative Aging and Elders Share the Arts.
- The preliminary results of the 2002–2006 “Creativity and Aging Study: The Impact of Professionally Conducted Cultural Programs on Older Adults,” by Gene Cohen, M.D., Ph.D., and director, Center on Aging Health and Humanities, George Washington University; and Jeanne Kelly, director, Levine School of Music, Arlington Campus.
- Insights and guidance from members of the White House Conference on Aging’s Policy Committee, Bob Blancato and Gail Gibson-Hunt.

- Lifelong learning and building community through the arts by Rick Moody, director of Academic Affairs, AARP; and Susan Perlstein.
- Creativity matters: the arts and healthcare by Gay Hanna, Ph.D., executive director, Society for the Arts in Healthcare; and Larry Polivka, Ph.D., director, Florida Policy Exchange Center on Aging.
- Universal design: designing for the lifespan by John Salmen, president, Universal Designers and Consultants; and Robert McNulty, director, Partners for Livable Communities.
- Communicating the impact of the arts to policymakers by Pat Williams, director, Citizen Membership, Americans for the Arts.

Following the presentations, participants were divided into three groups to discuss and develop recommendations that focused on three major issues: the arts and healthcare, lifelong learning and community, and universal design. Subsequently, this information was compiled into a report and submitted to the 2005 White House Conference on Aging on June 16, 2005, for review by its Policy Committee.

Recommendations for action as contained in the report are:

Arts and Healthcare: The arts are a national and human resource. Decision-makers should target existing and identify new Federal resources for direct investment in programs and public/private partnerships that capitalize on the vast capacity for expression among older adults by increasing their access to and utilization of participatory arts programs in community-based and healthcare settings. Specifically, this means:

- investing in quantitative and qualitative research that investigates the value of the arts in promoting health and long-term living;
- borrowing, adapting, or creating an economic model to quantitatively demonstrate the financial value of integrating the arts into long-term care for older adults;
- replicating and broadening the scope of Dr. Gene Cohen’s research (“Creativity and Aging Study: The Impact of Professionally Conducted Cultural Programs on Older Adults”);
- enhancing the professional, care-giving workforce’s ability to integrate the arts into a comprehensive approach to improved quality of care in our culturally diverse older population;
- using the arts to assist baby boomers in caring for their aging parents and planning for their own needs as older adults;
- evaluating the effectiveness of existing model programs and best practices of how older adults are actively participating in the arts in community-based and healthcare settings;
- increasing and sustaining the number of effective, accessible, and low-cost programs that incorporate a variety of art forms to promote the health and quality of life of older adults;
- establishing a national clearinghouse of model programs and best practices;

—disseminating model programs and best practices to the public and Federal, state, and local decision-makers; and

—creating “ArtistCorps” and training members to work with older adults in community-based and healthcare settings.

Lifelong Learning and Community: The arts are a national and human resource. Decision-makers should direct funding (e.g., the Older Americans Act) to support lifelong learning in the arts that is essential to developing economically vital and diverse communities, increasing quality of life across the lifespan, and reducing costs for health and long-term living. Specifically, this means:

—investing in quantitative and qualitative research that investigates the economic and health benefits of lifelong learning in the arts;

—providing incentives to regional arts organizations, state arts agencies, and local arts agencies to expand the definition of arts education beyond K–12 to lifelong learning;

—investing directly in programs and leveraging other private and public dollars to advance access to the arts for older Americans;

—mobilizing the public through a social marketing campaign (“selling” ideas, attitudes, and behaviors, like designated drivers, for example) focused on the importance of creativity throughout life;

—establishing partnerships among the U.S. Department of Education, museums, libraries, higher education, and community centers to create new and replicate existing model programs and best practices;

—collaborating with K–12, higher education, and community organizations to develop a mentorship program between older artists in the community and students;

—creating an initiative similar to Staying Sharp—an educational initiative to promote cognitive fitness co-sponsored by the National Retired Teachers Association (NRTA) (AARP’s Educator Community), and the Dana Alliance for Brain Initiatives—but focused on lifelong learning in the arts; and

—collecting, evaluating, and disseminating to the public and Federal, state, and local decision-makers information on existing model programs and best practices of how older adults are actively participating in the arts and lifelong learning.

Universal Design: The arts are a national and human resource. Universal design experts should educate the public and Federal, state, and local decision-makers about the importance of designing and creating homes, neighborhoods, and communities that support choice and livability throughout the lifespan; improve the quality of life for all; and contribute to reduced costs of long-term care by expanding opportunities for aging in place. Specifically, this means:

—educating designers, builders, and developers about the minimal cost of incorporating universal design into new home construction, which is 2 to 4 percent of the total cost, as compared to 20 to 27 percent of the total cost to retrofit an existing home;

—encouraging revisions to zoning laws to permit companion units;

- exploring with the banking and mortgage industries innovative housing finance options for older adults such as building or converting existing space into “granny flats” or companion units—attached or detached apartments built as additions to single-family homes or garages converted to apartments;
- encouraging builders of single-family homes and townhomes to adopt the EasyLiving Home^(CM) certification program, which incorporates the following features that increase the sellers’ market and offer buyers a home that’s easy for all to live in and visit:
 1. At least one full bath on the main floor, with ample maneuvering space
 2. A bedroom, entertainment space, and kitchen on the main floor
 3. Ample interior door widths
 4. One stepless entrance (at the front, side, or back of the home or through the garage)
- disseminating information on existing models of universal design, such as the revitalization of Silver Spring, MD, and Bloomington, IN; the partnership between the AARP and Home Depot to design communities, homes, and products that are safer and more user-friendly for older adults; and other best practices identified through the National Endowment for the Arts’ universal design initiatives;
- identifying and educating representatives of agencies, organizations, corporations, and foundations that fund dependent care programs and facilities in the community on common issues, solutions, and resources, and the benefits of community centers as opposed to separate day care and senior centers;
- mobilizing the public to educate for-profit businesses; trade associations; government agencies; builders; architects and designers; representatives of the housing industry; and local, state, and Federal leaders and policymakers;
- turning closed military bases into demonstration models of universally designed communities; and
- creating an innovative assistance program within the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) (similar to the former HUD 701 comprehensive planning grants) for the planning review of communities to encourage universal design and livability.

Mini-Conference on Creativity and Aging in America

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Full Report

On May 18–19, 2005, the National Endowment for the Arts, the AARP, the National Center for Creative Aging, and NAMM—the International Music Products Association sponsored an officially designated mini-conference of the 2005 White House Conference on Aging (WHCoA) on “Creativity and Aging in America.” Convened at the National Endowment for the Arts in Washington, DC, its primary purpose was to develop recommendations for the 2005 WHCoA about the importance and value of professional arts programming for, by, and with older Americans as a quality of life issue. A distinguished group of 44 leaders in the fields of aging, arts, education, philanthropy, government, and research came together to identify and develop recommendations that focus on lifelong learning and building community through the arts, designing for the lifespan, and the arts in healthcare.

Background

The White House Conference on Aging is legislated to convene once a decade to make aging policy recommendations to the President and Congress, and to assist the public and private sectors in promoting dignity, health, independence, and economic security of current and future generations of older persons. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, “The Baby Boomers (those born between 1946 and 1964) will start turning 65 in 2011, and the number of older people will increase dramatically during the 2010–2030 period. The older population in 2030 is projected to be twice as large as their counterparts in 2000, growing from 35 million to 71.5 million and representing nearly 20 percent of the total U.S. population.” Scheduled for December 11–14, 2005, the conference outcomes will guide national aging policy over the next decade through 2015. Issues to be considered include:

Planning Along the Lifespan: Public and private financing of services and benefits for current and future older Americans; increased personal savings and investments for retirement; continuing caregiving responsibilities; and long-term care insurance (e.g., tax incentives).

Workplace of the Future: Flexible work arrangements, re-employment, and maximum use of technology.

Our Community: Housing, transportation, access to supportive services, and livable communities.

Health and Long-term Living: Health promotion and disease prevention; transition from a disease-care system to a healthcare system; chronic disease management; chronic and acute disease research; use of technology in healthcare delivery and access; focus on nutrition needs and education; and home care and institutional care.

Social Engagement: Community service and volunteerism, leisure activities, and lifelong learning.

Marketplace: Responses to consumer needs and demands: product development (consumer products, consumable supplies, and services).

During the past year, many private- and public-sector organizations convened meetings designed specifically to develop recommendations around these issues for the 2005 WHCoA. Out of what is anticipated to be approximately 1,500 recommendations, the WHCoA's Policy Committee will refer only 100 to conference delegates who will select approximately 50 for its final report to the White House.

Purpose and Remarks

Paula Terry, director of the Endowment's AccessAbility Office, greeted participants and introduced Senior Deputy Chairman Eileen Mason. Mason thanked participants for their time, dedication, and interest in the arts and older adults. She noted that discussions would focus on "what has gone before in terms of aging and the arts, what can be done, and what needs to be done." She acknowledged the AARP, the National Center for Creative Aging, and NAMM—the International Music Products Association for their support of the conference and recognized Steering Committee members Michael Patterson, AARP; Barbara Gill, Dana Foundation; Mary Luehrsen, NAMM—the International Foundation for Music Research; Pat Williams, Americans for the Arts; Andrea Sherman, Consortium of New York Geriatric Education Centers; and Susan Perlstein, National Center for Creative Aging.

Mason then highlighted the groundbreaking research, "Creativity and Aging: The Impact of Professionally Conducted Cultural Programs on Older Adults," conducted by Dr. Gene Cohen of George Washington University. She explained that the preliminary results from the three sites—Elders Share the Arts in Brooklyn, NY; Center for Elders and Youth in the Arts in San Francisco, CA; and the Levine School of Music in Washington, DC—reveal strikingly positive differences in the social and physical health of older adults in the intervention group, as compared to those in the control group. Mason thanked the funders of this research: Center for Mental Health Services, SAMHSA, DHHS; National Institute of Mental Health, NIH; the AARP; Stella and Charles Guttman Foundation; and the International Foundation for Music Research. The National Endowment for the Arts initiated the study and serves as the lead sponsor.

Susan Perlstein, founder and executive director of the National Center for Creative Aging and Elders Share the Arts, also welcomed participants and shared her excitement about this conference. Noting that her national organization was not in existence when the White House last convened a conference on aging, she reflected that this field has "come a long way." In the last 10 years, Perlstein added, "we've heard about productive aging, successful aging, healthy aging and civic engagement. And this indicates that we're moving from a deficit approach—where older people are seen primarily as diseases in need of medical attention—to an asset or strength-based approach that recognizes what older people can bring to quality of life both for themselves and their communities."

Perlstein reviewed the history of the Older Americans Act as follows:

- In 1961, the White House organized the first conference on aging. That conference set the stage for Medicare, Medicaid, and the Older Americans Act of 1965. The National Endowment for the Arts did not exist at that time.
- In 1971, the Older Americans Act was reauthorized and new recommendations were adopted, but quality of life and the arts were not on the agenda.
- To work toward including the arts in the recommendations of the 1981 WHCoA, the National Endowment for the Arts developed an interagency partnership to sponsor the Mini-Conference on Arts and Aging that was held in 1981. The proceedings passionately articulated the importance of the arts in the lives of older Americans:

“The creation, understanding and transmission of art and knowledge make life more than a matter of physical survival—in Yeats’ words ‘make life more than a long preparation for something that never happens’. The arts enrich lives...It must be national policy to recognize and support the rights of older people to discover fulfillment through the arts and to ensure that they, no less than any other age group, be provided with opportunities for sharing, both as givers and as receivers....”

As a result, the arts and humanities were included in the 1981 WHCoA’s agenda for the first time ever. Still, arts recommendations were not included in the reauthorization of the Older Americans Act.

- In 1995, the National Endowment for the Arts worked with the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Administration on Aging to sponsor a May 10–11, 1995, WHCoA mini-conference on “The Arts, the Humanities and Older Americans” that positioned the arts as a quality of life issue. Jane Alexander was the first NEA chair ever invited to a WHCoA—where she addressed 2,600 delegates on May 4, 1995—and the arts were included in several WHCoA’s resolutions; however, recognition of the arts as a quality of life issue was quite limited.
- To date, the Older Americans Act does not embrace the arts directly. It does not yet recognize the vital link between the arts, health, and quality of life, nor does it acknowledge that the 36 million Americans who are now 65 years and older can make important cultural contributions as artists, patrons, creators, scholars, teachers, students, administrators, and volunteers.

Perlstein added that participants at the 1981 and 1995 mini-conferences articulated clearly and completely the many benefits of the arts to older Americans. For the mini-conference today and tomorrow, she expressed her hope that one result will be to mobilize national partners to support the inclusion of the arts in the reauthorization of the Older Americans Act. This year’s WHCoA, Perlstein explained, “comes at a time when the United States stands on the brink of an ‘aging revolution’—the impact of which we are just beginning to experience. Yet despite this demographic explosion, American society still undervalues and underserves its older citizens. Older people have limited access to our cultural institutions. They suffer a paucity of avenues for artistic exploration and creative self-expression. It is this climate of unprecedented challenge and opportunity that underscores the importance of today’s ‘Creativity and Aging’ conference.”

Rick Moody, director of academic affairs at AARP, endorsed Perlstein’s remarks and commented, “The things that we overlook like creativity in the last stage of life or the power of reminiscence, when we finally get around to paying attention to them turn out to have extraordinary power. As the Bible says, ‘the stone that builders rejected has become the foundation of the cathedral.’” He invoked the memory of Arthur Fleming, who led the Department of Health, Education and Welfare during the Eisenhower administration and created what became the Federal Office on Aging. “Older persons need a dream, not just a memory,” Fleming had said. Moody asked conference participants to focus over the next two days on the future.

Dana Gioia, chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, welcomed participants and thanked the representatives of the WHCoA Policy Committee, Bob Blancato and Gail Gibson-Hunt, for participating in the conference. He expressed his concern with the increasing separation of the arts from human life:

“What we’ve done is we’ve acquired a kind of wonderful scholarship, professional competence, powerful institutions, archives and research facilities, but we’ve done this at what I think is an impossible cost. We’ve separated the arts from the human purposes for which they were created. Arts exist as part of human culture...Universally, they are integrated in different ways in different

societies...You'll see them integrated in daily life, into rituals and into the whole life process. When you take it out of the life and try to replace it with commercial entertainment or video games, you have impoverished the arts and you have impoverished the culture. You have diminished the lives of people. What we are trying to do, and this is really the necessary work of the 21st century, is to reconnect what the arts are to the lives of the people.”

Gioia also described art as a catalyst for bringing together disparate groups within communities. For example, Operation Homecoming is a National Endowment for the Arts initiative in which some of America's most distinguished writers are conducting workshops at military installations and contributing educational resources to help the troops and their families share their stories. In addition, he noted that the arts have been a part of healing throughout history and are, today, integrated in many cultures around the world. Older adults benefit not only from arts and healing, but also from arts and learning; learning does not stop at age 18:

“There is something wrong with a society that believes you should be in an education system until you are 18 or 21, and you stop learning. You stop reading...What we are trying to do is to find a way of making arts—of making learning—a lifelong process. The human needs, the personal needs and the communal needs that you bring at each stage of your life somehow have arts as one of the necessary human languages...There are some truths that can only be told to us as stories, can only be felt as songs, can only be seen and experienced as dances or as representations of images. To take all of that language and integrate it in.”

Conversations with Artists

Roberto Martinez, Musician, Albuquerque, NM
Interviewed by Barry Bergey,
Director, Folk and Traditional Arts, NEA

Roberto Martinez started playing in public in 1954 when he and his wife's uncle formed the duo of Los Trobadores in Denver, CO. In 1960, he moved to Albuquerque, NM, and formed the group Los Reyes de Albuquerque. In 1964, the group recorded a corrido Martinez had composed, and it became an instant hit. Since then he and his group have performed throughout the United States, including at the Smithsonian Institution's Folklife Festival, the Museum of American History, the Wolf Trap Barns, and three national tours of the National Council for the Traditional Arts' (NCTA) Raices Musicales tours. He has received numerous awards, the most recent ones being the New Mexico Governor's Award for Excellence in the Arts (1999), Hilos Culturales Distinguished Traditional Hispanic Folk Artist (2000), and the National Endowment for the Arts National Heritage Fellowship Award (2003). In 2003, Martinez donated recordings that he had produced under his MORE label for more than 35 years to the Smithsonian Institution's Folkway Records. He continues to take his group to senior centers and social service agencies throughout northern New Mexico.

Martinez described growing up in the rugged mountains of northern New Mexico. As a “Depression baby,” born in 1929, he

“Anybody can dance the Mexican hat dance, but our objective has been to make people feel better and to know a little bit more about our culture.”

**—Roberto Martinez, Musician,
Albuquerque, NM**

drew a picture in words of a home without indoor plumbing or electricity, but with a richness of culture, tradition, and hospitality. Because of geographic isolation, the Spanish culture, religion, and language of his ancestors were preserved. “We still hang on to our traditions and our way of living,” Martinez added. He noted that his father sang while he worked.

After serving in the Air Force, marrying, starting a family, and living in Denver and New Mexico, Martinez composed a corrido about a man who was killed during the Vietnam War. Though this song, he said, launched his career, it wasn’t until 1982, when the NEA recognized him and other members of his group as accomplished folk musicians that “things really started to happen.” Bergey mentioned that the Heritage Fellowship Award that Martinez received in 2003 was actually given to both Martinez and his son—the first father and son pair so honored. Martinez expressed his pride that all five children and two grandchildren are musically gifted. He credited his wife Ramona and thanked her for being the strength of the family.

Currently, with grants from New Mexico Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts, his group conducts approximately 208 presentations/classes a year in senior centers, nursing homes, adult day care facilities, homeless shelters, child day care centers, detention centers, and prisons. “My group dares to tread where nobody dares to go,” Martinez joked. He shared his belief that the arts are very beneficial for older adults. Martinez thanked the NEA for giving him the opportunity to make people happy and to communicate the value and beauty of his culture: “Anybody can dance the Mexican hat dance, but our objective has been to make people feel better and to know a little bit more about our culture.”

**Amatullah Saleem, Dancer and Storyteller, Pearls of Wisdom, Brooklyn, NY
Interviewed by Douglas Sontag, Director, Office of Special Initiatives, NEA**

Amatullah Saleem studied at the Katherine Dunham School of Theatre and Cultural Arts in New York City, under master teacher Syvilla Fort and others. Following a European tour with the Katherine Dunham Dance Company, she freelanced in theaters and nightclubs and on television. Upon returning to the United States, Saleem opened the Pyramid Dance Studio in Soho-East, New York City. She also taught dance at the Hudson Guild and Goddard-Riverside Community Centers, Henry Street Settlement, and Summer Theater Workshops for the first Street Scene Community Arts Projects, sponsored through the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation. Later, Saleem migrated south to accept the position of dance/music specialist for the Winston-Salem Recreation and Parks Department, NC, where she produced the African Folk Arts Festival, an annual citywide project, for six years. She also founded and was artistic director of the regional dance troupe Otesha Dance and Music Ensemble. Upon her return to New York, and while teaching dance to elementary students at Muhammad University of Islam, she wrote and produced the children’s musical *A Reflection of the Harlem Renaissance*. Saleem graduated from Empire State College and transformed her short stories to become a storyteller with the Pearls of Wisdom, a project of

Elders Share the Arts. She is a member of the African Folk Heritage Circle, Inc., and the National Association of Black Storytellers.

Saleem, who was raised both in Winston-Salem, NC, and Harlem, NY, first realized that dance was a profession when her mother took her to see the 1943 movie, *Cabin in the Sky*, featuring the Katherine Dunham dancers. She credited her training at the Katherine Dunham School of Theatre and Cultural Arts for increasing her courage. Her talent and newfound confidence led her to Europe for over 10 years to dance; it was difficult for an African-American dancer to have a career on Broadway. In later years, back in the United States, Saleem received a degree in dance studies and interned with Elders Share the Arts. She joined the Pearls of Wisdom, which launched her career as a storyteller. The Pearls of Wisdom are community-based, multicultural elders who pass on their stories of heritage, humor, courage, and strength to diverse audiences throughout New York City and beyond. Saleem noted that she is now incorporating movement and songs into her stories, thus combining all of her artistic training.

In working in the schools, the Pearls of Wisdom are not only living history for the children and young adults, but are also surrogate grandparents. Saleem detailed the results of a survey of the kids' attitudes toward older adults. Before interaction with Pearls of Wisdom, the words and phrases used to describe older adults included "walk slowly," "grouchy," "mean," "they have money," and they "put their teeth in a glass." After the students spent time with the Pearls of Wisdom, their descriptions included "good people," "not grouchy," "good storytellers," and "they are pretty for old ladies."

The Pearls of Wisdom also work with older adults, encouraging them to tell their stories and preserve their culture. It is important to talk with younger people, she told them, "They need to know your triumphs and your struggles...Young people look through the windows of our memories and find assurances that life is worth living and striving for. Life is worth putting your energy into—your effort. Life is precious. It is not to be wasted because it is very short," she added.

Commenting that her "life has been the arts," Saleem spoke passionately about the importance of being a "natural resource" for the community: "We have skills and experience, and we can speak to the community of our culture and history." She expressed her sense of "standing on the shoulders of great black artists" and her desire to be the shoulders on which future generations would stand. Her life, she explained has been about "striving to be the one who carries the torch."

"Young people look through the windows of our memories and find assurances that life is worth living and striving for."

—Amatullah Saleem, Dancer and Storyteller, Pearls of Wisdom, Brooklyn, NY

Samuel Menashe, Poet, New York, NY
Interviewed by Dana Gioia, Chairman, NEA

Samuel Menashe, Ph.D., was born in New York, NY, the only child of Jewish Ukrainian immigrants. Raised speaking both Yiddish and English, he attended public schools and finished two years of college before enlisting in the U.S. Army during World War II. After the war, he finished a bachelor's degree at Queens College and then earned a doctorate at the Sorbonne. Menashe taught briefly at Bard College and Long Island University before living in California, Spain, England, Ireland, and France. His literary career has been paradoxical. Largely overlooked by mainstream critics and anthologists, his work has never found a broad audience; yet his poetry has attracted the admiration of a diverse band of discerning poets and critics in England, Ireland, and the United States. Menashe's obscurity probably comes from his strict devotion to a single literary enterprise, perfecting the short poem—not the conventional short poem of 20–40 lines, but the very short poem. As anyone studying *The Niche Narrows: New and Selected Poems* (2000) will discover, few of his poems are longer than 10 lines. Menashe is essentially a religious poet, though one without an orthodox creed. His central themes are the unavoidable concerns of religious poetry—the tension between the soul and body, past and present, time and eternity. Menashe's style is not merely compressed and evocative, but talismanic, visionary, and symbolic. He often writes about the human body, but he is a poet who understands physical reality in relation to the metaphysical.

Before enlisting in the infantry on August 11, 1943, Menashe studied biochemistry in college for two-and-a-half years. After the war while living in Paris, he started writing short stories about his childhood and his experiences as a messenger between the company and his platoon serving in eastern France in front of the Maginot Line. In the middle of one night, he

Salt & Pepper
Samuel Menashe

woke up and scribbled down his first poem. Menashe commented that he never expected to become a poet, “It was nothing that I aspired to.” Describing himself as a bohemian, he noted that he has taught intermittently, tutored French, and waited tables. He still lives in a five-flight walk-up with the bathtub in the kitchen. Menashe shared his belief that that World War II made him realize that each day may be your last. “How,” he asked, “can you talk about next year when you don't know if you'll be alive?” “Each day is the only day,” he added.

Here and there
White hairs appear
On my chest-
Age seasons me
Gives me zest-
I am a sage
In the making
Sprinkled, shaking.

Menashe expressed his gratitude to the Poetry Foundation for recently presenting him with an award for which he was perfectly qualified, “The Neglected Masters Award.” As part of this honor, he will be the first living poet to be published by the Library of America. Menashe explained that his first book was published in England, and it was another 10 years before he had a publisher in the United States. When asked if he was bitter about the lack of recognition over the years, Menashe said,

“No. Fundamentally, I'm a happy fellow. I feel creative when I wash my socks. If you are enjoying life, you are creative.” He added, “Poetry has been a pretty good workout...Being a poet has made me a pretty spry old man.” Menashe also shared the observation that “it is only the old who say you are as young as you feel.”

Presentations

“Creativity and Aging Study: The Impact of Professionally Conducted Cultural Programs on Older Adults,” Presented by Gene Cohen, M.D., Ph.D., Director, Center on Aging Health and Humanities, George Washington University, and Jeanne Kelly, Director, Levine School of Music, Arlington Campus

Cohen began his presentation by thanking the sponsors of this research: the National Endowment for the Arts; Center for Mental Health Services, SAMHSA, DHHS; National Institute of Mental Health, NIH; the AARP; Stella and Charles Guttman Foundation; and the International Foundation for Music Research. He also acknowledged the participating sites Elders Share the Arts, Center for Elders and Youth in the Arts, and the Levine School of Music.

Cohen explained that the research study was designed in 2001 with the aim of measuring the impact of community-based cultural programs on the general health, mental health, and social activities of older persons, ages 65 and older. He added that this is the first study ever conducted using an experimental design and a control group. The preliminary results, he said, reveal strikingly positive differences in the intervention group (those involved in intensive participatory, professional art programs) as compared to a control group not involved in intensive cultural programs. Referring to his written report of the preliminary results, Cohen explained, “The objective of this project has been to evaluate the effects relevant to general health, mental health, overall functioning, and sense of well being in older persons caused by active participation in cultural programs provided by professional artists involved in visual and literary arts, music, and other cultural domains. These programs draw upon a range of art and cultural disciplines, such as painting, pottery, dance, music, poetry, drama, material culture, and oral histories in a creative context.”

Cohen noted that in the mid-70s public health researchers and policymakers started questioning the premise that age causes illness. Instead, they

explored—and came to accept—that some diseases are “age-associated” as an analogy, Chicken Pox typically occurs in children, but being young doesn’t cause the disease. Also, in 1975, the National Institute on Aging was created and aging was actively studied as a problem. Today, “the focus is on the potential of aging, and on health prevention and promotion.”

To outline the theory and design of the creativity and aging research study, Cohen again referred to his written report. He called conference participants’ attention to the average age of the older adults in both the intervention and control groups. To be eligible to participate, they had to be 65 or older and generally living independently. In actuality, the age range was 65–100, with an average of 80, which is greater than life expectancy in the United States. Clinicians and researchers would generally consider interventions in this age group successful, in terms of positive health and social function, if there were less decline than expected over time in the intervention as compared with the control group.

Because the projects in Washington, DC, New York City, and San Francisco each had a different start date, the data analysis has only been completed for Washington, DC. Preliminary results show that not only was there less decline in the intervention group, but there was an improvement in health and social function. Cohen quoted from his written report, as follows:

- The intervention group reported better health one year after baseline starting point measures, while the control group reported their health was not as good one year post baseline.
- Both the intervention and control groups had more doctor visits one year after baseline compared to baseline, but the control group increased their doctor visits at a significantly greater rate.
- Both the intervention and control groups had more medication usage one year after baseline compared to baseline, but the control group increased their medication usage at a significantly greater rate.

- At the one-year follow-up, participants in the intervention group reported less falls than at baseline, while the control group reported more falls than at baseline.
- At the one-year follow-up as compared to baseline, participants in the intervention group showed greater improvements on each of the depression, loneliness, and morale scales as compared to the control group.
- At the one-year follow-up as compared to baseline, participants in the intervention group had on average an increase of two activities per person, while those in the control group had on average a decrease of two activities per person.

The trend data from both the New York and San Francisco projects show similar results.

In New York, Cohen noted, there was a remark made by a member of the intervention group that led to a rumor that being part of the study would improve your love life. Upon hearing this rumor, several control group members changed their names in an attempt to switch groups. At all three sites, Cohen reported that the older adults participating continued to do so even after the death of a spouse or other close family member.

In conclusion, Cohen stated, “What is remarkable in this study is that after one year the intervention group, in contrast to the control group, is showing areas of actual stabilization and improvement apart from decline—despite an average age which is greater than life expectancy. These results point to powerful positive intervention effects of these community-based art programs run by professional artists. They point to true health promotion and disease prevention effects. In that they also show stabilization and actual increase in community-based activities in general in the intervention group, they reveal a positive impact on maintaining independence and on reducing dependency. This latter point demonstrates that these community-based cultural programs for older adults appear to be reducing risk factors that drive the need for long-term care.”

Cohen introduced Jeanne Kelly, who directs the Arlington campus of the Levine School of Music. Kelly manages the Levine School’s participation in the creativity and aging research study. She shared her passion for conducting the Senior Singers’ Chorale, and noted that it has been the highlight of her career as an opera singer, choral conductor, and arts administrator. The initial response to the announcement about this chorus was overwhelming, and many older adults commented that they wanted to participate because the conductor was a professional artist. The chorus of 130 voices meets during three 10-week sessions a year. They perform approximately nine concerts a year, and have appeared several times on the Millennium Stage at the Kennedy Center. Kelly noted that chorus members love performing because they “get to give back” to the community. In working with the chorus, Kelly explained that it is important to treat older adults as professionals though they are not professional singers. It is also important to know when they are giving their all. Since joining the chorus, many of the singers have become involved in other activities, such as voice lessons and the Levine School’s New Horizons Band.

Robert Blancato, Member, Policy Committee, White House Conference on Aging

Blancato extended his congratulations to the National Endowment for the Arts and acknowledged its role in co-sponsoring this conference with the AARP. He cautioned participants that he is not representing the White House; nevertheless, he reported that the White House has appointed Larry Polivka, a conference participant, to the advisory group for the WHCoA, and that the dates have been moved from October to December 11–14, 2005. He suggested that participants monitor preparatory activities on the website, www.whcoa.gov.

Since there will be only 50 recommendations moving forward from the 2005 WHCoA, he urged participants to educate other organizations about creativity and aging and build coalitions. The process after the conference to integrate recommendations into public laws should be monitored, as well. Blancato also recommended that participants recruit legislators and the media to help carry the message about the importance

of the arts. Further, there should be discussions with conference delegates. Lastly, Blancato reminded participants to keep in mind the current, Federal fiscal environment; recommendations for increased funding should be positioned as an investment and not as an expenditure.

Gail Gibson-Hunt, Member, Policy Committee, White House Conference on Aging

Gibson-Hunt reported that the Policy Committee recently decided to divide the issue, “community and social engagement,” into “civic engagement” and “social engagement.” She also reminded participants of the large number of forums, events, conferences, and meetings all developing recommendations for the WHCoA. She expects that the Policy Committee will review approximately 1,500 recommendations. It will refer only 100 to the delegates. At the beginning of the conference, the delegates will vote to select the top 50. Their discussions at the conference will then focus on implementation strategies for the 50 recommendations. Gibson-Hunt urged participants to nominate themselves or others to be delegates. She added that Policy Committee members have been increasingly interested in the conference leading to a comprehensive, long-term care policy for the United States. A connection could be made between this issue and the results of Dr. Gene Cohen’s creativity and aging study.

Issue Presentations

1. Creativity Matters: The Arts and Healthcare

Background

The arts help to humanize healthcare environments and serve older Americans and caregivers as powerful aids in times of emotional vulnerability by bringing beauty into the stress-filled healthcare world. The arts provide older adults with a new appreciation of their innate ability to express themselves and a safe outlet for their emotions. The arts touch spirits that seek solace and encouragement. The arts help to celebrate and build community. Shared arts experiences strengthen communication and relationships between generations—older adults, their families, and care-

givers. Creating and experiencing art produces a rejuvenating effect on everyone involved, thereby celebrating and nurturing the entire community.

The arts in healthcare encompass a broad array of arts disciplines, including music, dance, drama, storytelling, poetry, design, and visual arts. Arts programming takes place in inpatient and outpatient settings, hospitals, nursing and convalescent homes, assisted living facilities, rehabilitation centers, hospices, mental health facilities, and community health centers. Medical colleges use the arts to encourage positive doctor/patient relations, as well as to help caregivers process the emotional effects of death and dying.

The visual arts (i.e., sculpture, wall and floor mosaics, and murals) provide directional assistance and points of familiarity within often large and confusing facilities. Sanctuaries and healing gardens provide destination choices for patients and visitors at a time when the range of choice and personal control over clothing, room, dining, and scheduling are often taken away. The arts provide relief from anxiety, distraction from pain, and respite from boredom.

Comments by Gay Hanna, Ph.D., Executive Director, Society for the Arts in Healthcare, and Larry Polivka, Ph.D., Director, Florida Policy Exchange Center on Aging

Hanna noted that in ancient ritual, arts and healing were inextricably linked. In the modern era, the connection was severed, most likely due to an emphasis on the “medical model”—treating the illness and not the person. Fortunately today, there is renewed interest in integrating the arts and healing. Hanna reported that Dr. Linda Emanuel recently referred to the arts as “an emerging aspect of critical care,” adding that “The arts are a vehicle for empathy.” Referencing the issue agenda of the WHCoA, Hanna commented on the connections between arts and healing, and “our community,” “health and long-term living,” and “social engagement” as follows:

Our Community

Sharing information and resources

Health and Long-term Living

Redefining healthcare and cultural institutions so that healthcare centers become cultural centers

Social Engagement

Integrating generations through the arts

Hanna reported that 2,000 U.S. hospitals (slightly more than 50 percent) have arts programming, according to a survey organized by the Society for the Arts in Healthcare and Americans for the Arts, in cooperation with the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations. Further, 73 percent of hospitals with arts programs have permanent displays of art, 48 percent present performances in lobbies and other public spaces, 36 percent have bedside activities, and 55 percent have arts activities geared for the health care staff.

Polivka commented that the interest in arts and healthcare would continue to grow, and that, as baby boomers age, the demand for cultural activities would increase. He added that access to cultural activities is as important as access to healthcare. To support this claim, he stressed the importance of documenting existing programs, finding a reliable and stable source of funding, and advocating for language in the Older Americans Act that allows area agencies on aging to use Federal funds for cultural activities.

2. Universal Design: Designing for the Lifespan

Background

Universal design is the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design. Universal design is not a passing trend, but an enduring design approach that assumes that the range of human ability is ordinary, not special. Contrary to the negative assumption that attention to the needs of diverse users limits good design, the experience of imaginative designers around the world has revealed that universal designs can delight the senses and lift the human spirit when integrated into the overall concept.

Universal design is a holistic and integrated approach to design that can and should play a significant role in resolving the economic, demographic, and social challenges facing our society now and in the future. Universal design can help to:

- Eliminate discrimination by eliminating segregation caused by nonaccessible and nonintegrated services, spaces, and systems.
- Empower people by allowing them to remain independent longer.
- Advance human dignity by enhancing independence.
- Enhance business by enlarging markets to include people who previously could not use inaccessible facilities.
- Ensure equity by giving everyone access to the goods and services offered in our society.

Comments by John Salmen, President, Universal Designers and Consultants, and Robert McNulty, Director, Partners for Livable Communities

Salmen explained that universal design works for the entire population; accessible design works for people with disabilities and many older adults. The goal of universal design, he added, is “always receding.” Salmen reviewed the seven principles of universal design as follows:

Equitable Use

The design is useful and marketable to people with diverse abilities.

Flexibility in Use

The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.

Simple and Intuitive Use

Use of the design is easy to understand, regardless of the user’s experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level.

Perceptible Information

The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's sensory abilities.

Tolerance for Error

The design minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions.

Low Physical Effort

The design can be used efficiently and comfortably, and with a minimum of fatigue.

Size and Space for Approach and Use

Appropriate size and space is provided for approach, reach, manipulation, and use regardless of user's body size, posture, or mobility.

Salmen cited examples of universal design, including Target's Design for All marketing campaign (<http://designforall.target.com/>) and Oxo's kitchen tools and housewares. In addition, he listed products such as talking sign systems, light switches with rocker panels, public toilets, and public parks with tactile maps and wind chimes to help visitors locate the entrance. Salmen also described features of a universally designed home, noting that, according to the AARP, 71 percent of older Americans live in a single family home. Universal design is the result of the users' involvement in the design process. Further, it is "design for the 21st century." Universal design combines architecture, personal assistance, procedures, equipment, and medical intervention.

McNulty, addressing the topic of universal communities, commented that the National Endowment for the Arts has funded design and architecture since 1967; perhaps the agency should direct some of the grant dollars toward universal communities and design. He reported that the vast majority of communities are not conducive to aging in places with limited housing options and few group homes. In addition, communities are typically designed around the car without easily accessible and affordable public transportation. Aging in place is also complicated by policies,

rules, and regulations that provide funds and services only to those who live in group facilities. McNulty expressed his opinion that universal communities require policy change in social service, culture, recreation (developing parks and libraries as NORCS—Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities), education (encouraging lifelong learning), healthcare delivery, and organized religion. The definition of creativity also needs to be expanded to include those over 60. Effecting change will be difficult, McNulty added; there is a dearth of municipal leadership even thinking about community design. McNulty stressed that taking on this challenge is important because it is "about our lives," how we define society, and our desire to create a community that embraces all ages. Moreover, older adults are an economic asset and not a liability.

Citing *The City: A Global History*, a new book by Joel Kotkin published by Modern Library Chronicles (April 2005), McNulty commented that "thriving cities are those that serve as sites of security, sanctuary/values and economy." Cities are less successful at cultivating a community and common identity among their diverse inhabitants. McNulty suggested that any urban strategy needs to include older adults. "Culture and age," he noted, "are mutual values."

3. Lifelong Learning and Building Community Through the Arts

Background

Older adults are too often isolated from mainstream education and community life. Yet, the arts are essential toward creating an American culture in which older people may continue to learn and have the opportunity to pass on their wisdom.

The arts can be a tool for creating community in the second half of life; they will be an important aspect of the baby boom generation with their emphasis on healthy, productive aging. Furthermore, the creative arts provide continuity and community within the continuum of care settings, and among older adults, families, and staff. Finally, intergenerational service learning projects through the arts offer opportunities for civic engagement.

Community arts programs for older people span a wide range of art projects, from mural making, intergenerational exchanges through all art forms, and arts exhibitions and festivals to community art classes in senior centers, community centers, libraries, museums, and schools.

Another aspect of intentionally including older adults in late-life learning is the “lifelong learning” trend, in which institutions welcome older learners to study the arts. This movement has taken on many forms, such as arts extension divisions in colleges and universities that encourage older adults’ participation and institutes for retired professionals in which older artists conduct classes for their peers.

Arts in education has provided support for arts learning in grades K–12. With the change in demography and the demands for lifelong learning, there is a need to shift the arts councils’ vision to include older people and implement policies for lifelong learning in and through the arts. Education can add vitality and meaning to life at any age.

Comments by Susan Perlstein, Founder and Executive Director, National Center for Creative Aging and Elders Share the Arts, and Rick Moody, Director of Academic Affairs, AARP

Perlstein commented that the arts reach the whole person and weave together disparate parts of the community. They are the “cultural connectors.” She emphasized the role of the arts as a catalyst for both social and civic engagement and for coalition building. Older people, she said, “are the keepers of our culture.”

Perlstein suggested that funding in the following areas could be directed toward lifelong learning and building community through the arts:

- Folk Arts: Funding for apprenticeship and mentorship programs
- Arts Education: Funding for partnerships between senior centers and schools, and for lifelong learning, not only for K–12

- After-School Programs: Funding for intergenerational programs
- Community Exhibitions and Performances: Funding for living history arts festivals

A significant barrier to community-based programs, Perlstein added, is the lack of sustainable funding.

Perlstein described how various types of community institutions are already using the arts to work with older adults. For example:

- Senior Centers: Senior Arts of Albuquerque, NM; and Center in the Park, Philadelphia, PA
- Long-term Care Facilities: On Lok, San Francisco, CA
- Higher Education: New World School of the Arts, Miami, FL
- Libraries
- Professional Arts Companies: Stagebridge Theatre Company, Oakland, CA; and Liz Lerman Dance Exchange, Takoma Park, MD

Perlstein also highlighted the Art of Aging: Creativity Matters public awareness campaign that includes—to date—town hall meetings, petitions about the importance of using the arts to work with older adults, and a panel from each state to be displayed at the WHCoA. In conclusion, Perlstein stated, “we know who we are, and we are well organized.”

Moody began his presentation with the question, “Does virtue make us healthy?” If the arts are part of the healthcare delivery system and the “health industrial complex,” he noted, “you may get evidenced-based art.” “Be careful what you wish for,” Moody warned. He advised the arts community to think about the larger context, which is the political economy of aging. With respect to economics, Moody added that the current system does not reward preventative healthcare. Indeed, where are the sustainable resources for prevention? He referenced Taoist medicine, in which a person only paid

the doctor if he or she got well. “Don’t neglect the possibility,” Moody said, “that people will actually pay for what they value.” The older population does, in fact, have disposable income; Elderhostel is the largest educational travel organization in the world.

The arts, according to Moody, “are not just positive.” He added, “Pain can be a source of creativity.” Consider, for example, Gospel music and the Blues. Quoting Immanuel Kant’s three metaphysical questions, “What can I know?” “What should I know?” “What can I hope?” Moody described art as the “essence of hope.” Lastly, he recited excerpts from “Sailing to Byzantium” and “The Circus Animals’ Desertion,” two poems by William Butler Yeats.

4. Communicating the Impact of the Arts to Policymakers

Pat Williams, Director of Citizen Membership, Americans for the Arts

Williams reminded participants that the report from this meeting is limited to a description of the issue, a list of the barriers, and proposed solutions. While the goal is to have the creativity and aging issue discussed at the WHCoA, it is important to push for action at the state and local levels of government. Gibson-Hunt agreed, advising participants to be pragmatic and to “form a basis for the future.” Williams suggested that this issue might be an effective catalyst for partnerships with the U.S. Conference of Mayors and the National Governors Association. She also mentioned the value of incorporating arts performances and exhibits into the WHCoA.

Sailing to Byzantium

William Butler Yeats

**That is no country for old men. The young
In one another’s arms, birds in the trees
—Those dying generations—at their song,
The salmon-falls, the mackerel-crowded seas,
Fish, flesh, or fowl, commend all summer long
Whatever is begotten, born, and dies.
Caught in that sensual music all neglect
Monuments of unageing intellect.**

**An aged man is but a paltry thing,
A tattered coat upon a stick, unless
Soul clap its hands and sing, and louder sing
For every tatter in its mortal dress,
Nor is there singing school but studying
Monuments of its own magnificence;
And therefore I have sailed the seas and come
To the holy city of Byzantium.**

If “a dedicated, sustainable source of funding” is a recommendation emerging from this conference, Williams urged participants to think both long- and short-term: it could take 10 years to find new resources, whereas redirecting existing resources could take less time. Williams also commented that it is more effective in the policy arena to focus on the economic argument than to emphasize the intrinsic value of the arts. The creative industries argument could also be expanded to include older adults.

Liz Lerman responded that both the intrinsic and extrinsic arguments are valuable, and it is necessary to “have the language to encompass both ends of the spectrum.” Mary Luehrsen expressed her disdain for “bean counter public policy.” “We have to be better strategists,” she stated, “and look at our audiences. Let’s get organized.” Referring to audiences, Cohen noted that economic factors motivate policymakers and understanding mechanisms motivates the public. Williams added that standard-setting bodies like the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) and factual surveys help inform public opinion. Jim Modrick shared his opinion that focusing on outcomes avoids the debate over intrinsic vs. extrinsic value. He explained, “Spending other people’s money means what I do has to be valuable to other people.” Michael Patterson recommended, “We also have to find the intrinsic value [of creativity] for society.” Cohen reiterated that all of the arguments—creativity matters, and qualitative and quantitative research—are valuable. He added that those who provide services to older adults will soon face the “Beyond Bingo” generation.

**O sages standing in God’s holy fire
As in the gold mosaic of a wall,
Come from the holy fire, perne in a gyre,
And be the singing-masters of my soul.
Consume my heart away; sick with desire
And fastened to a dying animal
It knows not what it is; and gather me
Into the artifice of eternity.**

**Once out of nature I shall never take
My bodily form from any natural thing,
But such a form as Grecian goldsmiths make
Of hammered gold and gold enameling
To keep a drowsy Emperor awake;
Or set upon a golden bough to sing
To lords and ladies of Byzantium
Of what is past, or passing, or to come.**

Report to the White House Conference on Aging

With the guidance of conference facilitator Todd Chester of the AARP, participants divided into three groups to develop issue statements and recommendations, and to identify barriers for the topics of arts and health-care, lifelong learning and community, and universal design. After several hours, participants reconvened to share the results of their discussions and to receive input from the complete body. Subsequently, the three groups met for the last time to refine their work.

Following the mini-conference, the issue statements, recommendations, and lists of barriers were compiled, edited, and reviewed by the Steering Committee. The NEA submitted the mini-conference report to the 2005 WHCoA on June 16, 2005, for review by its Policy Committee. The following is the text of this report:

Arts and Healthcare

A growing body of research—specifically the “Creativity and Aging Study: The Impact of Professionally Conducted Cultural Programs on Older Adults,” by Gene Cohen, M.D., Ph.D., and director, Center on Aging Health and Humanities, George Washington University*—clearly demonstrates that active participation in the arts promotes mental and physical health among older adults living independently in the community, improves the quality of life for those who are ill, and reduces risk factors in older adults that drive the need for long-term care. Despite these findings, the arts continue not to be considered as part of the solution to the broader societal issues of health and long-term living.

*<http://www.arts.endow.gov/resources/Accessibility/CreativityAgingProgressRep.pdf>

Barriers

- The public and healthcare professionals are unaware that arts in healthcare has a high return on investment: it is cost effective and efficient, and has a significant positive impact on patients, older adults, and the community.
- There are no mechanisms for evaluating existing models of arts in healthcare programs, or for disseminating information on best practices.
- There is insufficient sustained funding to support existing best practices that promote interdisciplinary strategies in arts in healthcare.
- Professional artists are underutilized in community-based and healthcare settings.
- There is a lack of public education and information sharing about the benefits of arts in healthcare.
- Healthcare professionals often focus on treating the illness—the “medical model”—and not the patient.
- The definition of “quality of life” is constantly evolving, and the baby boomers are anticipated to have different standards than their parents (i.e., “Beyond Bingo”).
- The infrastructure to support arts in healthcare programs does not exist.
- The current healthcare system is slow to change.

Proposed Solution

The arts are a national and human resource. Decision-makers should target existing and identify new Federal resources for direct investment in programs and public/private partnerships that capitalize on the vast capacity for expression among older adults by increasing their access to and utilization of participatory arts programs in community-based and healthcare settings. Specifically, this means:

- investing in quantitative and qualitative research that investigates the value of the arts in promoting health and long-term living;
- borrowing, adapting, or creating an economic model to quantitatively demonstrate the financial value of integrating the arts into long-term care for older adults;
- replicating and broadening the scope of Dr. Gene Cohen’s research (“Creativity and Aging Study: The Impact of Professionally Conducted Cultural Programs on Older Adults”);
- enhancing the professional, caregiving workforce’s ability to integrate the arts into a comprehensive approach to improved quality of care in our culturally diverse older population;
- using the arts to assist baby boomers in caring for their aging parents and planning for their own needs as older adults;
- evaluating the effectiveness of existing model programs and best practices of how older adults are actively participating in the arts in community-based and healthcare settings;
- increasing and sustaining the number of effective, accessible, and low-cost programs that incorporate a variety of art forms to promote the health and quality of life of older adults;
- establishing a national clearinghouse of model programs and best practices;
- disseminating model programs and best practices to the public and Federal, state, and local decision-makers; and
- creating “ArtistCorps” and training members to work with older adults in community-based and healthcare settings.

Lifelong Learning and Community

Recent landmark studies—specifically the “Creativity and Aging Study: The Impact of Professionally Conducted Cultural Programs on Older Adults,” by Gene Cohen, M.D., Ph.D., and director, Center on Aging Health and Humanities, George Washington University*—demonstrate the benefits of the arts for social engagement, enhancing community life, and lifelong learning, thus improving the quality of life and well-being of older adults. Lifelong learning in the arts educates and engages older adults as learners and teachers, contributing to individual, community, and public life. Despite these benefits, Federal, state, and local decision-makers have not invested in the arts as a way to tap into the cultural and creative potential of older adults.

*<http://www.arts.endow.gov/resources/Accessibility/CreativityAgingProgressRep.pdf>

Barriers

- Older adults experience discrimination, which creates intergenerational conflict; an imbalance of community resources; and reluctance among Federal, state, and local decision-makers to invest in older adults.
- There are few existing public policies that promote cross-sector or multigenerational partnerships in the community or that support communities.
- Existing research on the benefits to older adults of community and social engagement has not resulted in effective public policy.
- Resources and the attention of Federal, state, and local education policymakers have been skewed toward grades K–12, thus undermining lifelong learning.
- Older artists are not valued as mentors or resources.
- Older adults often have financial and health problems that prevent them from traveling to an educational or cultural institution.

Proposed Solution

The arts are a national and human resource. Decision-makers should direct funding (e.g., the Older Americans Act) to support lifelong learning in the arts that is essential to developing economically vital and diverse communities, increasing quality of life across the lifespan, and reducing costs for health and long-term living. Specifically, this means:

- investing in quantitative and qualitative research that investigates the economic and health benefits of lifelong learning in the arts;
- providing incentives to regional arts organizations, state arts agencies, and local arts agencies to expand the definition of arts education beyond grades K–12 to lifelong learning;
- investing directly in programs and leveraging other private and public dollars to advance access to the arts for older Americans;
- mobilizing the public through a social marketing campaign (“selling” ideas, attitudes, and behaviors, like designated drivers, for example) focused on the importance of creativity throughout life;
- establishing partnerships among the U.S. Department of Education, museums, libraries, higher education, and community centers to create new and replicate existing model programs and best practices;
- collaborating with K–12, higher education, and community organizations to develop a mentorship program between older artists in the community and students;
- creating an initiative similar to Staying Sharp—an educational initiative to promote cognitive fitness co-sponsored by the National Retired Teachers Association (NRTA) (AARP’s Educator Community) and the Dana Alliance for Brain Initiatives—but focused on lifelong learning in the arts.

—collecting, evaluating, and disseminating to the public and Federal, state, and local decision-makers information on existing model programs and best practices of how older adults are actively participating in the arts and lifelong learning.

Universal Design

Design is both an art form and a science: universal design addresses the right for everyone—from children to older adults—to use all spaces, products, and information in an independent, inclusive, and equal way. This contributes to livability—a sense of community and of individual worth within the community—throughout the lifespan; improves the quality of life for all so that multiple generations may live and work together; and increases opportunities for “aging in place,” thus contributing to reduced costs of long-term care. Despite these benefits the public and Federal, state, and local decision-makers have not supported or invested resources to connect the business and residential environment with a universal infrastructure.

Barriers

- The marketplace is only slowly beginning to appreciate the value of universal design; therefore designers, builders, and developers—who respond to the marketplace—are not focusing on the need for universally designed homes, neighborhoods, and communities while populations are rapidly aging.
- The public has not demanded that state and local leaders implement policies to make communities livable for all people.
- Funders are not providing sufficient and sustainable resources for the universal design of single-family homes, neighborhoods, and communities.
- Universal design is incorrectly perceived to be associated with regulations (mandated accessibility), thereby making Federal, state, and local decision-makers reluctant to explore its value.

Proposed Solution

The arts are a national and human resource. Universal design experts should educate the public, and Federal, state, and local decision-makers about the importance of designing and creating homes, neighborhoods, and communities that support choice and livability throughout the lifespan; improve the quality of life for all; and contribute to reduced costs of long-term care by expanding opportunities for aging in place. Specifically, this means:

—educating designers, builders, and developers about the minimal cost of incorporating universal design into new home construction, which is 2 to 4 percent of the total cost, as compared to 20 to 27 percent of the total cost to retrofit an existing home;

—encouraging revisions to zoning laws to permit companion units;

—exploring—in conjunction with the banking and mortgage industries—innovative housing finance options for older adults, such as building or converting existing space into “granny flats” or companion units, which are attached or detached apartments built as additions to single-family homes, or garages converted to apartments;

- encouraging builders of single-family homes and townhomes to adopt the EasyLiving Home^(CM) certification program, which incorporates the following features that increase the sellers' market and offer buyers a home easy for all to live in and visit:
 1. At least one full bath on the main floor, with ample maneuvering space
 2. A bedroom, entertainment space, and kitchen on the main floor
 3. Ample interior door widths
 4. One stepless entrance (at the front, side, or back of the home, or through the garage)
- disseminating information on existing models of universal design, such as the revitalization of Silver Spring, MD, and Bloomington, IN; the partnership between the AARP and Home Depot to design communities, homes, and products that are safer and more user-friendly for older adults; and other best practices identified through the National Endowment for the Arts' universal design initiatives;
- identifying and educating representatives of agencies, organizations, corporations, and foundations that fund dependent care programs and facilities in the community on common issues, solutions, and resources, as well as the benefits of community centers as opposed to separate day care and senior centers;
- mobilizing the public to educate for-profit businesses; trade associations; government agencies; builders; architects and designers; representatives of the housing industry; and local, state, and Federal leaders and policymakers;
- turning closed military bases into demonstration models of universally designed communities; and
- creating an innovative assistance program within the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) (similar to the former HUD 701 comprehensive planning grants) for the planning review of communities to encourage universal design and livability.

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