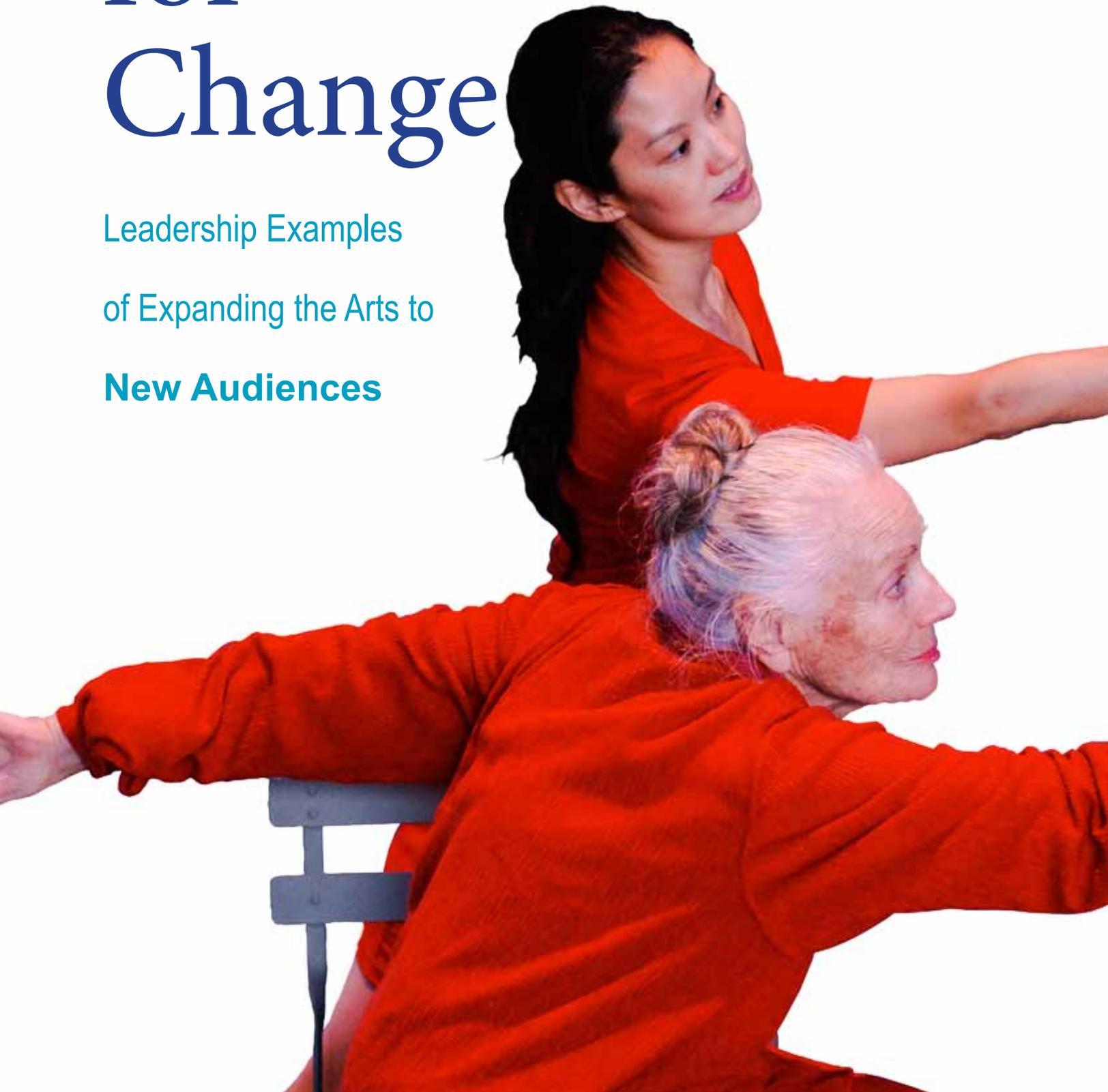


# Stories for Change

Partners for Livable Communities  
Funded by **MetLife Foundation**

Leadership Examples  
of Expanding the Arts to  
**New Audiences**





1429 21st Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20036  
[www.livable.org](http://www.livable.org)

## About MetLife Foundation

MetLife Foundation was established in 1976 to continue MetLife's longstanding tradition of corporate contributions and community involvement. Our commitment to building a secure future for individuals and communities worldwide is reflected in our dedication to empowering older adults, preparing young people and building livable communities. Since it was established, MetLife Foundation has provided more than \$530 million in grants to nonprofit organizations addressing issues that have a positive impact in their communities. For more information visit [www.metlife.org](http://www.metlife.org)

## About Partners for Livable Communities

Partners for Livable Communities is a non-profit leadership organization working to improve the livability of communities by promoting quality of life, economic development, and social equity. Since its founding in 1977, Partners has helped communities set a common vision for the future, discover and use new resources for community and economic development, and build public/private coalitions to further their goals. For more information visit [www.livable.org](http://www.livable.org)

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Cover  
Lydia Wei and Dina Paisner of Dances for a Variable Population  
"Autumn Crossing on the High Line"  
Courtesy of Dances for a Variable Population and Photographer Meg Goldman.

Back Cover  
Students learn dignity and confidence when their artwork is professionally displayed in Manchester Bidwell Corporation's gallery.  
Courtesy of Manchester Bidwell Corporation.

# Stories for Change

Leadership Examples  
of Expanding the Arts to  
**New Audiences**

A Report from **Partners for Livable Communities**

Funded by **MetLife Foundation**

“Change is the only constant in this era. New audience change will come from two major forces: the **AGING** of America’s population and **NEWCOMERS** to our country who can enrich our economic and civic lives. Are you ready for these consumers?”

—Robert H. McNulty,  
President and CEO of Partners for Livable Communities

## Acknowledgments

Many individuals helped to make this report complete. Partners especially wants to thank Liz Bieber for compiling and writing much of the report, Brian Miller and Will Cooper for writing many of the Best Practices for the report, Jane King for editing the report, and Jessica Scheuerman for designing the report. Partners’ leadership of Robert McNulty and Penny Cuff gave direction and insight based on their many years of experience.

Partners wants to thank the many leaders in arts organizations, foundations, city staffs, and others who gave generously of their time through interviews, conversations and critical thinking. Finally, Partners thanks MetLife Foundation, which understood the value of this report and its contents.

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**P**artners for Livable Communities, with the support of MetLife Foundation, has engaged in groundbreaking work that demonstrates that arts and culture are as essential to sustaining communities as bricks and mortar. For those who are new to the mores and language of this country, or for those who are older, barriers too often prevent participation in arts and cultural activities. To widely circulate notable ideas that increase access for older and immigrant populations to the arts and culture, Partners issued *Culture Connects All: Rethinking Audiences in Times of Cultural Change* in 2010. *Culture Connects All* describes innovative programs of arts organizations in six major American cities that have greatly expanded their reach to older adults and immigrants.

*Stories for Change* broadens this scope to encompass nearly 50 arts and cultural best practices that have originated in communities, both large and small, across the country. This publication is brimming with ideas, brought to fruition by varied types of organizations, that have enhanced the availability of arts and culture for the burgeoning numbers of immigrants and older adults in our communities.

These best practices report the innovations of museums, libraries, theaters, orchestras, dance ensembles, parks, botanic gardens, universities, and the many other organizations now grappling with changing demographics. Those who hope to enhance the lives of their older and immigrant residents can find approaches portrayed in these *Stories* that can be adapted to meet the needs of communities of any size.

As the mayor of Chattanooga, I recognize that arts and culture are significant drivers for community and economic development, and for the livability of my community. In this compelling collection of *Stories for Change*, you will find that Partners has showcased programs and strategies that can make arts and culture a tool for change and a community asset that enable immigrant and older populations—and everyone—to thrive. ■



**The Honorable Ron Littlefield**

*Mayor of Chattanooga, Tennessee  
Chairman of the Board, Partners for  
Livable Communities*



As new refugees with a dream for their children to succeed in America, the Yangs adapted quickly. Parents are strong supporters of their children's early education. The youngest ones completed Stone Soup's Early Learning Academy and teen daughters are serving the community through projects in Girl Scouts. Courtesy of Stone Soup Fresno.

See best practice on page 80.



Opera tells stories through words and music. Every culture has a musical storytelling tradition, providing the common ground on which HGOco builds new and lasting relationships with the communities we serve. HGOco is Houston Grand Opera's unique initiative which creates opportunities for Houstonians of all ages and backgrounds to observe, participate in and create art. Since 2007, HGOco has commissioned ten new works, including the world's first Mariachi opera, *Cruzar la Cara de la Luna / To Cross the Face of the Moon*, along with countless innovative community projects, reaching more than 750,000 people in the greater Houston metropolitan area.

In 2011, HGOco was the only Texas recipient of an ArtPlace grant to build our *Song of Houston* programs that promote community-building through arts with *Home and Place* community collaborations. The strength of HGOco's work is based on our standing as a cultural resource in the city of Houston and our collaborative partnerships with our communities to tell the stories of those who call Houston their home. *Song of Houston: Home and Place* creates projects to maintain community conversations, traditions and culture in three Houston communities. With Houston considered one of the first majority-minority cities in the U.S., the role of Houston Grand Opera as a cultural resource to the city of Houston is instrumental in promoting cultural understanding and pride for all communities. HGOco is proud to provide artistic and innovative community-engaging opportunities for Houston-area senior adults and immigrants to share their stories.

HGOco connects our company to our community through collaboration. *Song of Houston: Home and Place* offers a creative ways to create and share the stories that create communities of Houston.

Founded in 1955, Houston Grand Opera is an internationally renowned opera company with a reputation for commissions and producing new works, including 45 world premieres and six American premieres since 1973. HGO contributes to the cultural enrichment of Houston and the nation through a diverse, innovative, and balanced program of performances, events, broadcasts, and community and education projects. ■

**Sandra Bernhard**  
*Director of HGOco*

**Kiana Day**  
*Home and Place Programs Director,  
Houston Grand Opera*

HoustonGrandOpera



HGOco

ARTPLACE



“Arts and cultural organizations traditionally have two main roles: the production of arts or cultural activities, and the presentation of them to an audience.

Both of these fundamentally involve people, as producers or as spectators; it is people who give cultural organizations their means and purpose. Given this importance, when demographics change, cultural organizations must pay attention; and demographics are indeed changing.

Two of the fastest growing population groups present a timely opportunity for engagement but are at risk for being ignored by many cultural organizations that could benefit from their participation.

**Which are these two rapidly expanding populations?  
They are the rising tide of immigrants and older adults.**

Whether looking at the ever-increasing waves of immigration or the incoming wave of adults over the age of 65, it is clear that America’s demographic makeup is increasingly diverse and proportionally older than in the past. At the same time, arts and cultural organizations in search of new audiences have primarily focused on the ‘young and wireless.’

While this may be one strategy for bolstering the number of tickets sold, it means that cultural organizations may be ignoring the populations that need them most, and also ignoring a host of opportunities to increase their reach and resources in the community.”

—*Culture Connects All*, 2010  
available at [www.livable.org](http://www.livable.org)

**A**rts and cultural organizations support community and economic development by meeting the needs of diverse and sometimes vulnerable populations. Partners for Livable Communities (Partners) believes that cultural strategies are not only a major economic force in many communities but contribute tremendously to education, cultural identity, race relations, community pride, quality of life, and the livable community. Arts organizations are receptive, creative, and resourceful, and can apply their talents to turn neighborhood tensions into opportunities for interaction.

*Stories for Change* is a compendium of best practices that builds upon the findings of *Culture Connects All: Rethinking Audiences in Times of Demographic Change*, the 2010 report by Partners for Livable Communities. *Culture Connects All* describes the state of the arts and cultural sector in a time when two populations are rapidly expanding: older adults (65 and older) and immigrants, and provides a series of recommendations for arts and cultural organizations to reach out, and adapt their programs in new ways. *Culture Connects All* explores six cities in-depth along with fully-developed, groundbreaking programs that focus on attracting immigrant and older adult audiences in each of those cities.

*Stories for Change* responds to the request for more stories: additional best practices that showcase the strategies of many unique organizations, not generally in the spotlight, that have designed arts and cultural programs, and some non-arts programs, to serve older adults and immigrants. Partners recognizes that institutions of all types—from libraries, museums, and schools to arts councils, historical societies, and parks—can reach out quickly and creatively to immigrant and older audiences for a “win-win” for all. Stories abound of arts and cultural centers tutoring all age groups in English as a Second Language; sparking imaginations through the visual arts; refining math skills in after-school programs; incorporating Alzheimer’s patients and caregivers in museum programs; or casting parts in theater productions without regard to age. Many of these model programs are unknown beyond their regional boundaries, and are occurring in smaller institutions and communities that are too often overlooked.

Partners has often heard that “we didn’t know about X,” or “if we knew this was happening in Y, we would have tried it here.” Or Partners’ favorite, “What a great idea; let’s do it!” Many of these best practices can be easily implemented, and do not require a major overhaul of staffing, operations, or an organization’s

mission. Others call for partnerships with community, regional, state, or national organizations. And some, like the well-known Alzheimer's Project of the Museum of Modern Art, require staffing, partnerships, and considerable funding; even so, that relatively complex model has been adapted in museums of all sizes across the country. And why? Because the model and its success are compelling and the need is unfortunately large. Equally compelling are the stories revolving around immigrants. And again, the need is there and it is growing larger every day.

These best practices were carefully chosen to create a varied collection. The criteria for selection included a range of considerations: the types of institutions; innovative practices or programs; the population served; and the geographic location and size of the community where the programs take place. From Partners' perspective, arts and cultural institutions encompass theater, opera, and dance companies; libraries; botanic gardens; community arts organizations; public parks; orchestras; museums; and organizations for historic preservation. This broad scope is an acknowledgement that many

organizations, though not traditionally defined as arts or cultural in nature, nonetheless serve as hubs for creativity and exploration in a community and often demonstrate the characteristics that appeal to new audiences and participants. In a few cases, best practices included in this compendium do not feature arts and culture, or do not serve older adults or immigrants, but showcase strategies or practices that could be adapted for arts and cultural programs.

Partners recognizes that leaders in the nascent stages of this work are hungry to learn from their peers and the communities currently benefitting from these models, and to hear those stories that are often lost in the national, regional, and even local discussions about how institutions can operate as instigators of change. These stories for change not only describe personal accounts of trial, error, and success, but also impart an understanding of the steps taken to create a model that can be emulated by others. ■

## How to Use This Publication

This compendium of best practices is meant to inspire and incite action. Arts and cultural groups are not the only organizations that can learn from, and consider adopting, some of the strategies and practices identified in *Stories for Change*. Community leaders will also benefit from reviewing the stories, as they are applicable in many contexts, and

are likely to stimulate thinking about innovations that will benefit their own agendas.

For those who wish to identify quickly the best practices immediately relevant to them, the types of institutions are categorized and listed in the Contents section and the populations served in the Index on page 110. ■

*“Both arts education  
and career training  
help people realize  
they are assets, not  
liabilities.”*

—Manchester Bidwell  
Corporation

Living jazz legend Roger Humphries graces  
the stage at Manchester Bidwell Corporation.  
Courtesy of Manchester Bidwell Corporation.

See best practice on page 28.



## Area Agency on Aging: *Philadelphia Corporation on Aging: Generation Appreciation Philadelphia*

**Location** • Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

**Serving** • Older Adults

**Web** • [www.genphilly.org](http://www.genphilly.org)

**G**eneration Appreciation Philadelphia, better known as GenPhilly, is a network of over 250 young professionals who are “working for an age-friendly Philadelphia.” Members connect with older adults through their work and personal lives; they ask themselves and their peers about the type of city in which they one day want to grow old. Today GenPhilly is a program of the Philadelphia Corporation for Aging (PCA), the Area Agency on Aging for the County/City of Philadelphia.

The group was created in February 2009, when seven young professionals working with seniors recognized the need to 1) create a formal support network for people in their twenties and thirties who work with older adults and 2) influence peers who work outside of the field of aging, to incorporate the interests of seniors into their work. From that launching point, the founders created a hub of workshops, conferences, and networking opportunities that today provides an outlet to an emerging generation of professionals. GenPhilly members are lawyers, artists, social workers, doctors, gardeners, and more.

GenPhilly was co-founded by Kate Clark, who is now chair of the organization and full time planner at PCA. She coordinates policy and planning for the agency’s Age-Friendly Philadelphia effort. Clark believes that much of the group’s success is due to the void it fills. Before formation of GenPhilly, very few organizations were talking about aging issues. GenPhilly serves as a resource for young leaders, enabling them to become the “aging experts” in their offices. The group began its professional development exchange by using social media to inform recipients about relevant conferences, job announcements, and articles.

Soon after its founding, GenPhilly sponsored its first public event, a brown-bag lunch at the United Way that featured a researcher who works with seniors on neighborhood social capital. Since then, the group has held over 18 events on a myriad of subjects. Guest

speakers have included the director of the Mayor’s Office of Civic Engagement, who reported on the city’s efforts to bridge generation gaps. GenPhilly also hosts bimonthly network meetings where members describe their work to facilitate new and innovative partnerships. The meetings are designed to influence the future leaders of the city to create an urban policy agenda that ensures that Philadelphia becomes an age-friendly city. These events have helped to change the way Philadelphians think about their growing population of 276,000 older adults.

Philadelphia has the highest proportion of seniors in the 10 largest cities in the United States.<sup>1</sup> Interestingly enough, from 2005 to 2009, the fastest-growing groups in Philadelphia were people in their 20s, 30s, and 80s. Philadelphia, therefore, must

GenPhilly’s Pet-Tastic Happy Hour is an event organized by GenPhilly and the Delaware Valley Alzheimer’s Association Junior Committee that is a pet accessory drive to support pet companions of homebound older Philadelphians. Courtesy of GenPhilly.





Rockstars Are Ageless event screening "Young At Heart" (note heart-shaped pretzels!). Courtesy of GenPhilly.

do more to connect and align the generations to capitalize on each group's resources, time, skills, and talents.

GenPhilly's members believe that an age-friendly city is one that embraces and supports people of all ages. Key to such an environment is access to good healthcare, social services, accessible housing, transportation, parks, and more. Additionally, accommodating physical features (ramps, railings, raised garden beds in community gardens, and winter-proofed public walkways) that go above and beyond the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Accessibility Guidelines,<sup>2</sup> are all assets to a lifelong community.

Through GenPhilly, several young professionals worked together on a new initiative called Age-Friendly Parks, after learning that 72 percent of older Philadelphians reported, in 2010, that they had not attended a public recreation facility (including a park) within the past year, and just one percent said that they did not live near one.<sup>3</sup> These statistics made it clear that a majority of older adults live near a recreation facility, but do not use it. PCA, the Fairmount Park Conservancy, the Klein Jewish Community Center, and Philadelphia Parks & Recreation created a checklist of the features in a park that would make the public space more appealing for seniors. They then conducted focus groups with older adults to obtain their feedback. Today, GenPhilly members are working to identify signature age-friendly parks in the city and to inform park designers and community groups about the importance of creating senior-friendly environments. As with any planning strategy, GenPhilly hopes to show its members that older adults should be at the table with decision makers to discuss the social and physical elements most meaningful to their lives.

Clark says that, in the future, she would like to see more projects that build on the partnerships that GenPhilly has facilitated between those members working in the aging network and those employed outside of the aging field. Clark describes one of GenPhilly's biggest successes as its growth from seven members to a network of 250 people, in only two and one-half years. The increase in members has enabled more individuals, organizations, and networks to begin thinking critically about aging and the age-friendly city.

One of Clark's biggest lessons learned has been altering GenPhilly, originally a group with membership requirements, to an inclusive network that does not require burdensome obligations. Young professionals who join GenPhilly are very busy, but they can benefit an organization that aims to capitalize on a diversity of work interests. This change led Clark to declare the group as, "less of a member organization and more of a movement."

From the perspective of The Philadelphia Corporation for Aging, the network is a creative strategy for promoting and enhancing its mission. PCA is a private nonprofit organization, one of the region's largest, which has served as Philadelphia County's Area Agency on Aging since 1973. PCA's mission is to improve the quality of life for older Philadelphians and people with disabilities and to assist them in achieving their maximum level of health, independence and productivity. Special consideration is given to those with the greatest social, economic, and health needs. PCA carries out its mission through planning, advocacy, program development, and service coordination and delivery. ■

**Athletics Program:**  
*Good Life Games of Pinellas  
County, Florida*

**Location** • Florida

**Serving** • Older Adults

**Web** • [www.goodlifegames.org](http://www.goodlifegames.org)

**T**he Good Life Games of Pinellas County encourage adults 50 and over to participate in their own “Senior Olympics,” to promote athleticism and healthy lifestyles. Many older adults are intimidated by the idea of athletic competition, out of fear that an injury or lameness could permanently limit their mobility. Specifically designed to meet the physical capabilities of older adults, the Olympic-style games include archery, track and field, swimming, cycling, and others. Players in Good Life Games are also eligible for statewide and national competitions.

The Good Life Games program was founded in 1979 to promote the vitality and quality of life of older adults, 88 percent of whom have at least one chronic condition. These conditions can be improved or managed with exercise. Many seniors are also uncomfortable with the idea of competing with younger, fitter individuals. Good Life Games provides older adults with a unique program that enables them to compete with peers facing similar physical and emotional challenges, and in events tailored to meet their mobility status.

Today, Good Life Games and approximately 20 other Regional Florida Senior Games host hundreds of athletes, ranging in age from 50 to 90 years, in a series of year-round competitive events sanctioned by the U.S. Olympic Committee. Both athletic and recreational games are included. Opportunities for social events, volunteerism, and other activities are also featured. The county-wide Games are supported through the public/private partnerships of cities, media and corporate sponsors, volunteers, and more. The Pinellas County Games are one of the earliest and most successful Senior Games competitions in the country. The fine reputation of the Games attracts older athletes from places as far as New Jersey, Texas, and Canada. The Games culminate in the yearly Florida Senior Games State Championships, in which champions from each of the Florida counties are selected to participate.

The competition is always fair, as Senior Games are played in five-year age groupings for men and women, and include traditional athletic disciplines such as cycling, track and field, and swimming. To ensure accessibility for all older adults, many lower-impact and lower-intensity events have been added to the roster, from shuffleboard and table tennis to bocce. For some athletes, competition continues after the statewide championship Games end. The top finishers progress to the biennial National Senior Games. Good Life Games are funded by a variety of local and state organizations, including the City of Clearwater, the area Rotary Club, and AEGON. Additional funding also comes from entry fees, which average \$25 per athlete. Just as important, however, are the hours devoted by volunteers who organize and referee the Good Life Games.

Numerous studies have shown that older adults who exercise are at lower risk for diabetes, heart disease, and stroke, and have an improved cognitive function and a reduced risk of falling. Public health organizations, such as the National Institutes of Health and the Centers for Disease Control, continue to promote exercise as an important component of the health and well-being of older adults. The number of older adults who participate in the Good Life Games and other athletic initiatives focused on them are likely to see increased participation and recognition as a valuable community service. ■

## Botanic Garden: *The Cheyenne Botanic Gardens*

**Location** • Cheyenne, Wyoming

**Serving** • Older Adults

**Web** • [www.botanic.org](http://www.botanic.org)

**T**he Cheyenne Botanic Gardens are unique not only for their use of solar and wind energy to enhance sustainability, but also because of their workforce, in which many volunteers are older adults, individuals with disabilities, and at-risk youth. According to Gardens staff, 90 percent of the physical labor is done by volunteers. The Gardens are an invaluable resource to the Cheyenne community, offering all the attractions of a beautiful environment, as well as occasions for structured, meaningful, and healthful activity for members of the community.

The Botanic Gardens are located in Cheyenne, Wyoming, the state capital and a city of approximately 60,000. With over 73,000 annual visitors, the Gardens are a valuable regional resource, which endeavor to “inspire, beautify, and enrich the High Plains through gardening, volunteerism, education, and stewardship.” The Gardens work to meet the following goals: exhibit diverse plants and landscapes; provide volunteer opportunities that enrich the lives of seniors, persons with disabilities, and at-risk youth; educate visitors; and create demonstrations of gardens, landscapes, renewable energy, and sustainable, earth-friendly approaches.

*“The process of working in the Garden has a therapeutic effect: as the plants grow, so does the self-esteem of the older adult volunteers.”*

—Director, Cheyenne Botanic Gardens



Horticultural Therapy for Seniors. Courtesy of Cheyenne Botanic Gardens.

The Cheyenne Botanic Gardens were founded in 1977 as part of an initiative to build a nonprofit, solar-heated greenhouse. Construction was funded through the low-income assistance programs of Community Action of Laramie County, Inc., a local social service agency. In 1986, when the Gardens relocated to Cheyenne’s Lions Park, a new solar-heated greenhouse was constructed. In the early 1990s, the Gardens’ new nonprofit foundation arm, the Friends of the Cheyenne Botanic

Gardens, underwrote the development of the Paul Smith Children’s Village, a children’s garden with a focus on sustainability “past, present, and future.” The Gardens’ solar greenhouse also serves the broader community, as a source of food and bedding plants for the Gardens and the entire Cheyenne Parks system. All of the heat and half of the electricity for the greenhouse are solar, and the Children’s Village utilizes wind-powered pumps, electric turbines, and solar heating.

In addition to environmental sustainability, the Gardens take pride in social sustainability. Senior volunteers, working together with at-risk youth and adults with disabilities, have assumed responsibility for over 90 percent of the labor necessary to maintain the Gardens. In 2010 alone, 169 volunteers provided a total of 5,717 hours of work. This creative volunteer program provides a great service to participating seniors, who benefit from physical activity and social interaction. In working with the

other volunteers, older adults form invaluable relationships with different members of the community. They are often able to build mentoring relationships with youth, a win-win for all. It is rare for seniors, youth, and disabled adults, who often lead separate lives, to be able to join in a shared effort. In addition, working in the Gardens has a therapeutic effect; as the plants grow, so does the self-esteem of volunteers.

Volunteers make it possible for the Gardens to operate with a small staff. In part due to low energy costs, its operations budget is relatively low. The Gardens rely on support from the community and derive nearly all funding from the Gardens' foundation. The innovative approach of the Gardens has been acknowledged in the numerous awards for community leadership, including the President's Volunteer Action Award from President Reagan, the Community Hero Award from Wyoming Governor Jim Geringer, and the Award of Merit from the American Public Garden Association. By providing a valuable asset to the community through an innovative approach to the traditional role of a botanic garden, the Cheyenne Botanic Gardens can count on continued community support for years to come. ■



Above: 2009 Summer Performance Series.

Right: Cheyenne Botanic Garden Grounds and Greenhouse Conservatory.

Courtesy of Cheyenne Botanic Gardens.



## Botanic Garden: *Queens Botanical Garden*

**Location** • Queens, New York

**Serving** • Immigrants

**Web** • [www.queensbotanical.org](http://www.queensbotanical.org)

**Q**ueens Botanical Garden (QBG) has long made it a practice to promote consistent interaction with its neighboring ethnic communities, including the Chinese, Filipino, Latino, and South Asian communities in and around Flushing, Queens. *The Ambassador Program* is one notable example. Through the program, QBG recruits and trains volunteers in various ethnic groups to represent the Garden in their communities. But this is not something the Garden started from scratch. It happened after many years of community engagement, spearheaded by Susan Lacerte, the executive director of QBG.

Lacerte explains that the key is finding “the leader in each community. I noticed when I first became director that the diversity of the borough was not reflected in our attendance. We’ve learned through trial and error. We first tried to be all things to all people. What we’ve learned is that you have to work with each community on its own terms.”

“Every culture has its own social service network,” Lacerte notes. “For Korean Americans the church is central because it’s how they stay in touch with their culture. It’s not so important in Korea, but it is central here. You have to engage with different cultures in very different ways. The Korean American community looks inward. They like to observe you when they’re planning.”

According to Lacerte, when the Garden tried guided tours, it failed to attract additional visitors from the community. Communication with leaders in the community proved to be the best way to get a start on enticing residents into the Garden. Lacerte explains that,



Courtesy of QBG Staff.



As an urban oasis in one of the most culturally diverse counties in the nation, Queens Botanical Garden celebrates the connections between people and nature through 39 acres of inspiring gardens, innovative educational programs and demonstrations of environmental stewardship. Courtesy of QBG Staff.



“The leaders communicated what they wanted. We learned that the Chinese wanted to do Tai Chi. We started hosting a Tai Chi session on our grounds. Now 250 to 300 people are on our grounds doing Tai Chi each day, most of them Chinese.” To entice visitors from the many ethnic communities to the Garden, QBG drew them in by planting flowers and trees that they value. For example, the Chinese community values tree peonies; the Korean community values orchids, and the national flower of Korea, the Rose of Sharon; and the Latino community values a vibrant, diverse, and colorful garden.

However, because of the Garden’s extensive outreach, it now will avoid particular colors in displays because they violate the sensitivities of certain cultures. When possible, the Garden piques the interest of the various cultures with special programs. The staff identified a Korean botanical leader who spoke to the audience in Korean. And with its South Asian neighbors, the Garden celebrated the Festival of Diwali.

Describing a recent tour she was leading, Lacerte notes that of the 35 to 40 people, “There were a few Caucasians, some Chinese, South Asians, and Latinos. It really validated what we were doing. The people who come to our public events now are so much more diverse than 15 years ago. That’s how you know that your efforts are working.” Community leaders form an informal sounding board for vetting proposals for changes in the Garden. As one example, recently the Garden started to charge an admission fee during peak months, though formerly admission had been free. The staff discussed this extensively with the surrounding communities beforehand and posted the new admissions policy in Spanish, Chinese, and Korean as well as English. The result was creation of a *Community Access Pass*, which was suggested by the Tai Chi leaders and other ethnic community leaders. The pass was sold for \$20 for the first season and made available to community residents. The careful vetting and outreach has enabled the Garden to adopt this practice with the community’s understanding.

The U.S. Census Bureau used QBG as a station where people could fill out the census form. As Lacerte comments, “Every community wants to have a place to gather.” The Garden is now recognized as an important community gathering place. The Garden’s goal is to become a resource for cultural research that explores the unique connections between plants and people. The success of such research depends on a continued and open dialogue between the communities of Queens and the Garden. The Queens Botanical Garden is uniquely qualified to serve as a site in which individuals living in the very diverse community can enlighten Garden staff about their traditions and the role of plants in their cultures. ■

## Bureau of Transportation: *Portland Bureau of Transportation*

**Location** • Portland, Oregon

**Serving** • Older Adults

**Web** • [www.portlandonline.com](http://www.portlandonline.com)

**R**egular exercise plays an essential role in healthy aging; seniors who spend most of their day sitting or engage in very limited movement begin to lose mobility quickly. The need to maintain mobility comes at a time of life when many seniors no longer feel safe behind the wheel of a car, and must rely on public transportation, or walking, to get to the grocery store or other destinations. To help older adults establish healthy exercise patterns, the Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT) organized *Senior Strolls*, which provides structured group walks in the Portland Area for adults 55 and older.

In March 2004, the Portland City Council accepted “Walkable Neighborhoods for Seniors,” a report by the local nonprofit organization, Elders in Action (EIA). The report prompted concerted efforts by PBOT to improve senior mobility and make Portland safer for older pedestrians. The PBOT notes that, “The health benefits of walking are numerous, including reduced risk of heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and obesity. A good baseline for improving health and reducing the risk of chronic disease is 10,000 steps a day (2,000 steps is approximately one mile).”

Through *Senior Strolls*, PBOT expects to achieve its goal of improving the health and well-being of the senior population through a walking program. Participants in *Senior Strolls* meet every Wednesday at 10:00 a.m., from May through October. Walkers visit various parks along the TriMet lines (Portland area transit), traversing 1.5 to 2.5 miles, with the length increasing as participants enhance their endurance. On average, 50 to 60 seniors join the walking group, which has grown in size throughout the life of the program. In addition to enabling seniors to walk and talk with one another, *Senior Strolls* often takes seniors to historical sites and cultural attractions, with leaders providing background on the setting to supplement exercise with cultural enrichment. A prize is awarded at the end of each walk to thank seniors for participating and to encourage their continued attendance. The program is funded by the Portland Bureau of Transportation and grants.

*Senior Strolls* is a low-cost approach to maintaining the mobility of Portland’s older adults, and PBOT values the opportunity to inform seniors about the mobility options available to them. The program has been well-received by participants, one of whom wrote, “Thanks so much! The free admission was a great blessing to my low-income budget. Thanks to each and every one of you for your help and part in making this possible.”

*Senior Strolls* continues to grow, as is evident in PBOT's decision to support two groups. In addition, the Board is also now launching *Ped Pals*, to match walkers who live in close proximity and would like a walking partner. ■



Senior Strolls participants. Courtesy of the Portland Bureau of Transportation.



## Chorus: *Young At Heart Chorus*

**Location** • Northampton, Massachusetts

**Serving** • Older Adults

**Web** • [www.youngatheartchorus.com](http://www.youngatheartchorus.com)

**P**urple Haze, Forever Young, Road to Nowhere; The Clash, Prince, and Sonic Youth—these are just some of the titles and artists whose work is performed by the world renowned Young At Heart Chorus, with members ranging in age from 73 to 89. The Chorus was founded in 1982 by Bob Cilman and Judith Sharpe, evolving from a daily song session with residents of a housing project for the elderly, The Walter Salvo House, in Northampton. Cilman says that he and the staff wanted to provide something more than food for residents. One day a resident announced that she could play the piano and the song sessions were born.

Today, Young At Heart has become an indie, pop, and classic rock chorus. A singing sensation, the chorus performs at such venues as concert halls, theatres, elementary schools, and prisons. The original chorus members included World War I and II survivors, vaudeville singers, and even a centenarian who circled around Sharpe's piano to sing classic numbers. After the Chorus performed for several years on small stages, on one night in 1986 everything changed: 84 year-old "Diamond" Lillian Aubrey performed a version of Manfred Mann's "Do Wah Diddy" that brought the house down. Cilman realized there was potential to transform the singing group into something truly special.

In 1983, the Chorus performed its first stage production with the help of the local and innovative No Theater, and the performance was an instant hit. Performances brought in a broad cross section of community members young and old, and created a buzz that attracted new performers. Today, members of the Chorus include former schoolteachers, executives, doctors, and food service workers, who specialize in reinterpreting rock, punk, and R&B classics that speak to their "youngness," dispelling any preconceived notions about their age when the first

notes are sung. When the Chorus takes the stage, the audience is struck by the vivaciousness of the performers, and their ability to relate to the audience through popular music.

Members of the Chorus vary in their physical capabilities: some can stand and dance, others rely on walking sticks to stand, and others cannot stand the whole time, so they sit. Despite their varying mobility, and even because of it, the Young At Heart Chorus members embrace their age, and often spunky personalities, to wow audiences time and again.

Young At Heart performs a show on stage. Courtesy of photographer Jodi Nicholas.



When asked how the Chorus is unique, Cilman responded, “I wouldn’t know where to begin. I think what we do is unique. When you try to describe it, it sounds like a gimmick. I think we have an honest approach to the music and we bring the energy needed for rock and roll.” Cilman doesn’t mention the age of the Chorus members, or their limitations. Rather, he focuses on the natural talent and energy they bring to the stage and to the music he directs. As stated on its website, “Young At Heart is not about old people performing, but rather a performance that happens to feature older people.” Young At Heart has become sought after for its performances and Chorus members. But the Chorus benefits the members, just as much as it does the audiences—and maybe more.



Young At Heart performs a show on stage, featuring chorus members Fran, Pat, and Steve. Courtesy of photographer Yuka Yamaji.

Chorus members come from senior housing, independent living, and assisted living, and many have lost their spouses and are looking for a new community. The Chorus is a means for its members to break out of their potentially isolating living situations and to embrace a community that offers interaction and socialization, and also a source of purpose and meaning. Many of the Chorus members cite singing and music as a key component of their lives. Some have prior professional theater or music experience, while others performed extensively on the amateur level; and still others had never stepped onto a stage before turning 80 years old.

Some Young At Heart Chorus members car pool with one another each week from small towns outside of Northampton, a mid-sized town of around 30,000, forming a routine and special bond with one another. A public transport van, paid for by Young At Heart, is offered to members; many are able to use other public transportation, find rides with family and friends, or with each other. Members are a “second family,” and when sickness or worse, death, strikes a Chorus member, the group is a constant and caring force.

When asked about the challenges of directing Young At Heart Chorus, Bob Cilman says that the members are as similar to work with, “as any group of people on a mission,” but that the challenges lie in making sure the performances are appealing to a diverse audience. Cilman often hears questions from those wishing to start a similar group in other communities.

His advice? Don’t try to be just like Young At Heart. Instead, those who are interested should find out what they and their community are passionate about, to make it their own and to make it work. Cilman acknowledges that directing Young At Heart requires a lot of work, and that before taking on any similar endeavor, those involved have to make sure they love it. Which he does, of course—and the love of the performance and the community of Young At Heart is what urges the group forward, attracting new members and learning new songs year after year. Young At Heart has the ability to touch the lives of all, and by standing the common audience-performer paradigm on its head, showcases older adult members on stage rather than in seats. The Chorus promotes the idea that the best time of life can come in the later years. ■

## Community Arts Organization: *Elders Share the Arts*

**Location** • New York City, New York

**Serving** • Older Adults

**Web** • [www.estanyc.org](http://www.estanyc.org)

**E**lders Share the Arts (ESTA) fosters the creativity of older adults by transforming their memories into art, and linking generations and cultures through dance, theater, writing, visual arts, and storytelling. Located in New York City, ESTA has served over 30,000 youth, adults, and elders, nationally and internationally, since its founding 30 years ago. ESTA facilitates relationships among community members, bringing together neighbors of all ages and ethnicities to build community, address neighborhood issues, and celebrate common ground.

*History Alive!*, ESTA's intergenerational arts program, was created to develop and sustain connections between generations and across cultures, using reminiscence and oral history as a basis for artistic expression and a catalyst for community building. The program annually serves 800 youth and elders from diverse backgrounds throughout New York City. *History Alive!* is built on partnerships, including a lead organization such as ESTA; a senior center, church, or nursing home; and a school or youth organization. Weekly workshops, which range from 12 to 28 week sessions, are led by teaching artists and conclude with a final event that features the stories of the youth and elders woven into a dance, theater piece, mural, or anthology of stories.

*History Alive!* grew out of the concern that cultures and generations were clashing as a result of neighborhood transitions. It became imperative to reinvent family and community connections. Realizing that different generations had no meeting ground for diffusing tensions and learning more about one another, ESTA created

*History Alive!* as a vehicle for enabling all ages to interact. Teaching artists mine the group's personal experiences, illuminate them, and find the common themes that can unite the generations. Deep and meaningful relationships are formed between the youth and elders.

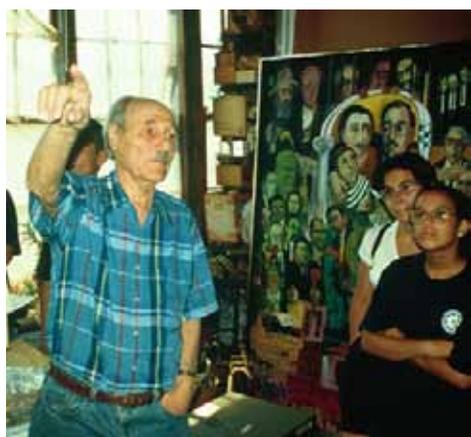
Trained by Elders Share the Arts, the teaching artists engage participants in creative activities in order to address issues that emerge during the workshop. They support a group dynamic that fosters

Intergenerational Dance Group.  
Courtesy of Elders Share the Arts.



openness, curiosity, discovery, and fun. The workshop content has five parts: Orientation, Discovery, Development, Rehearsal or Creation, and Performance/Exhibition.

ESTA has learned lessons along the way that revolve around commitment from partners, communication issues, and sustainability. It is important that each partner invests resources in the program, which can range from space to publicity to partial funding. The investments of the partners ensure accountability. Creating a detailed plan, defining the responsibilities of each partner, and developing ways in which they communicate are vital to successful and sustainable partnerships.



Top: Dance program in Flushing.

Bottom: Intergenerational arts project with former WPA workers.

Courtesy of Elders Share the Arts.

In Flushing, Queens, ESTA pairs fifth graders (many of whom are newly-arrived immigrants from Asia and the Middle East) with Eastern European and Chinese elders from the neighboring senior center. This program has operated in Flushing for over 10 years. Participants meet once each week for 28 weeks and perform a final theatrical production in the spring. One elderly couple, Mattie and Billy, escort the children from the school to their senior center every week. They relish the opportunity to contribute to their community and learn new skills. Mattie reports that, “I just love performing now, and I never imagined saying that!” The program also offers them a chance to hand down their stories and legacies to young people.

*History Alive!* fosters friendships between generations, and opens the hearts and minds of those involved. The old feel invigorated, and the young are exposed to life from a point of view that is deep, broad, and kind. Participants of all ages learn a new way to negotiate, and elders have reported that they feel safer in the neighborhood and that they now matter to young people. They find that they have something to give to young people, and their new bonds with them dispel feelings of isolation. Meanwhile, the youth acquire new social skills and learn creative ways to express themselves.

Created in 1994, *History Alive!* has served over 10,000 youth and older adults and has won multiple awards. It is an extremely adaptable program that, with training from ESTA’s experienced staff, can be replicated. This program and others at ESTA have been recognized by the National Endowment for the Arts, the Community Service Society of New York, and the New York State Intergenerational Network. In 1999, ESTA received the National Award for Excellence from the U.S. Committee for the Celebration of the United Nations International Year of Older Persons, which recognizes “intergenerational, culturally diverse community programs, and best practices across the country.” ■

## Community Arts Organization: *Indo-American Center*

**Location** • Chicago, Illinois

**Serving** • Immigrants

**Web** • [www.indoamerican.org](http://www.indoamerican.org)

Adjusting to a new cultural setting and environment later in life is clearly a difficult task. The challenge is exponentially harder when living in a vast new city like Chicago—with its multitude of cultures and rich history that are often more daunting than the Sears Tower. To help ease such difficult transitions, the Indo-American Center of Chicago was established to foster mutual understanding and ensure that the cultural traditions of South Asia (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Bhutan) survive, as well as adapt, in their new environment.

The programs of the Indo-American Center complement the cultural and historical heritage of the many older adults who participate in them. Programs focus on ensuring their wellness through yoga, healthcare workshops, arts and crafts, board games, and discussions on topics of interest. Most of those who take part have recently relocated from India and Pakistan. Many of the programs are conducted in Hindi and Gujarati, but the Center also offers opportunities to learn English.

Recognizing a cultural divide, the Indo-American Center decided to step up its program to inspire greater understanding among the generations. The Center invited youth from the community to join *Intergenerational Dialogues*, a series of workshops and social events. Through the workshops and events, older adults at the Center shared their memories and ideas with the younger generation, to strengthen and build new ties within their community.

Many of the older adults from South Asia have trouble adjusting to their new environment, with its very different surroundings, lifestyles, customs, and language. They miss their lives back home. Discussions during *Intergenerational Dialogues* are beneficial, as sharing of memories aids in the transition. Seniors have a chance to express themselves, share their ideas, teach children songs and rhymes—and even facts about the use of South Asian herbal medicines. They enjoy arts and crafts with the children and relish the opportunity to give them advice.

The *Dialogues* supplement the Center's regular daily programming for older adults. One of the first *Dialogue* topics required responses from both children and the older adults. They were asked: "What can children learn from seniors and what can seniors learn from children?" This approach proved to be a great way for both groups to get to know each other and served as guidance to the staff in planning activities.

A favorite activity was Antakshari, an Indian singing competition requiring knowledge of many songs, largely drawn from Bollywood hits of the last 40 years. The game was a great way for youth and seniors to feel a common identity.

Other activities included conversations about the various herbs and spices, sold in the local Indian and Pakistani grocery stores, which have a host of uses in folk medicine. The dramatic final event was a mock wedding planned by seniors and youth. A boy and girl were chosen for bride and groom. Participants were very excited about planning and partaking in the various wedding customs, including activities of Dholki and Sangeet, as well as the wedding itself. The activities helped the seniors enjoy elements of their native cultures and to share them with youth.

The resulting intergenerational dialogue fostered a sense of communal bonding. Older adults shared their memories and ideas with a new generation and youth told of their experiences in growing up in a multicultural environment. The program encouraged increased socializing among older adults, and established a stronger sense of belonging among the participants. ■

## Community Arts Organization: *Manchester Bidwell Corporation*

**Location** • Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania  
**Serving** • At-Risk Youth and In-Transition  
Adults  
**Web** • [www.manchesterbidwell.org](http://www.manchesterbidwell.org)

In 1968, amid riots and post-industrial depression, college student Bill Strickland founded the Manchester Craftsmen's Guild (MCG) as an after-school program, to bring arts education and mentorship to inner-city youth in his neighborhood. Today, the *MCG Youth & Arts Program*, as it is now called, serves high school students by offering classes in ceramics, design, digital arts, and photography.

In 1972, Strickland assumed the leadership of a struggling trade school located near the Guild. He immediately saw the opportunity for synergy. Both arts education and career training help people realize that they have important strengths and can contribute to society. The trade school, called Bidwell Training Center (BTC), now offers programs ranging from horticulture to healthcare technology, and is a nationally-accredited and state-licensed, career-training institution for adults. Since 1972, jazz, real estate management, and other organizations have been added to the mix, to increase the positive impact of the institution on the community.

Manchester Bidwell Corporation encompasses all of these programs which, while technically separate, share a common president, board members, and state of the art facilities. The Corporation has grown into a multi-million dollar annual operation with a combined staff of about 100 people, and reaches thousands of adults and youth annually. Over 90 percent of the youth who attend MCG's arts programs graduate from high school and 80 percent of BTC's graduates find jobs.

The goal of the *MCG Youth & Arts Program* is to use the arts to educate and inspire youth to become productive citizens. For example, MCG's *Apprenticeship Training Program* teaches inner-city and at-risk high school students the technical and aesthetic elements of ceramics, photography, drawing, painting, and computer-aided artistry, while providing guidance and support for their pursuit of long-term goals. Visiting artists, who are regionally, nationally, or even internationally renowned, offer workshops and impart skills and life-altering lessons. Personal and career counseling help students meet the challenges awaiting them beyond high school. Students can also get a sense for college life through visits to area campuses sponsored by the program. The goal is not to produce artists, but to mentor troubled youth and find an approach to learning, tailored for each individual, which can lead to college and to productive lives.

Strickland sees a connection between the creativity instilled by a love of arts and the skills needed for business success. He believes that the arts are the most accessible, cost-effective means of fostering creative thinking. "Artists are by nature entrepreneurs," says Strickland. "They have the ability to visualize something that doesn't exist, to look at a canvas and to see a painting. Entrepreneurs do that, which is what makes them different from business people. Business people are essentially administrators, and entrepreneurs are by definition



Youth art students express their identities while learning transferrable skills in the design studio. Courtesy of Manchester Bidwell Corporation.

visionaries. Entrepreneurs and artists are interchangeable in many ways, and many companies know that.”

Knowing that not everyone is an artist/entrepreneur, but that all people deserve a chance for a better life, Strickland also runs Bidwell Training Center. BTC serves a different population of in-need individuals in the Pittsburgh region. A career-training program for adults, BTC’s strategy is three-fold. First, financial aid is available to all students, so that money does not become a barrier to success. Second, the Center offers training and placement assistance to help adults realize a high degree of personal development as well as career success. Lastly, the school also provides employers in the region with well-trained graduates prepared for work in fields for which employment opportunities exist. These fields include medical claims processor, pharmacy technician, chemical laboratory technician, culinary arts, and more.

The success of BTC’s students, after one year of instruction as chemical laboratory technicians, is just one example of the power of its training programs. BTC trains approximately 30 students each year in this field, 77 percent of whom have found jobs in their fields. The organization’s strong relationship to the corporate sector facilitates placement of students in valuable externships at corporations such as Alcoa, Bayer Material Science, and Consol Energy. Manchester Bidwell Corporation’s societal impact does not end there. The Drew Mathieson Center for Horticultural and Agricultural Technology contributes additional educational facilities as well as a sustainable source of beauty for the region. Additionally, Harbor Gardens Park, MBC’s commercial office building, houses programs and tenants in an elegant space. *MCG Jazz*, whose purpose is to preserve, present, and promote jazz through performances and education programs, promotes the power of music with its long-running concert series and educational programming.

Today, a powerful blend of mentorship, education, beauty, and hope creates a safe space in which Pittsburgh’s in-need population, young and old, can learn in a comfortable setting. The Manchester Bidwell Corporation is so confident in its vision that it founded the National Center for Arts & Technology, which creates similar educational environments across the nation. Currently, three affiliate sites are operational and many more are in the works. ■

## Community Arts Organization: *Movimiento de Arte y Cultura Latino Americana (MACLA)*

**Location** • San José, California

**Serving** • Immigrants

**Web** • [www.maclaarte.org](http://www.maclaarte.org)

**M**ovimiento de Arte y Cultura Latino Americana (MACLA) is an inclusive contemporary arts space grounded in the Chicano/Latino experience. MACLA incubates new visual, literary, and performance art in order to engage people in civic dialogue and community transformation. Located at the intersection of the SoFA arts district and the William/Reed Corridor of downtown San José, MACLA creates arts and cultural programming to overcome the conflicting interests of longer-term neighborhood residents, new immigrants, and new development. With a wide array of programs based in the arts, MACLA has worked to establish a more unified community identity that includes old and new residents alike and can withstand changing demographic pressures in the future.

MACLA was formed over 20 years ago to support Latino artists who wanted to use their work as the basis for community change. MACLA fosters innovative Latino art that reflects the culture, struggles, and triumphs of Latino communities and their experiences in America. Focused on supporting young Latinos in the visual, literary, and performing arts, MACLA has sponsored over 700 artists. The organization offers 50 programs and five to six shows annually that draw over 30,000 people each year. Although the organization is dedicated to involving Latino participants and audiences, MACLA understands the importance of integrating its work and activity with the broader community, and its programs and performances average 30 percent non-Latino participants.

MACLA's role in the William/Reed Corridor has expanded greatly. Its center serves as a gallery space and performing arts venue. It is also a resource for those who want to use the arts as a technique in community building, and serves as a space for open and honest community dialogue. In 2011 MACLA, joined by the Black Eyed Peas Peapod Foundation and the Adobe Foundation, opened the new *Peapod Adobe Youth Voices Academy (PAYVA)*. PAYVA, a free arts education program located at MACLA, is dedicated to mentoring the youth of Silicon Valley (ages 13 to 18) in professional multimedia and curriculum technologies for art, dance, music, and video production for underserved youth. The organization is also working to form a neighborhood business association as a resource for the neighborhood's immigrant small business owners. As a part of this process, it has created a business directory, in both English and Spanish, for distribution across the city.

MACLA's work in the community at O'Donnell's Gardens Park in San José, where MACLA hosts many events, helped neighborhood groups create a vibrant space. Through these projects in public spaces, MACLA unites the community, and supports a dialogue that assists in breaking down communication barriers. With a constant influx of new immigrants (mostly from Mexico and Vietnam), and new community development, the downtown William/ Reed Corridor is in need of strong community advocates.

Additionally, *South First Fridays* at MACLA is a monthly art walk that offers a night of dance, opera, visual arts, informational talks, and more, to the public. The arts and entertainment district in downtown San José comes alive when MACLA offers a “mash-up of performances”, from Norwegian Polka to Dominican Meringue music.

With many changes occurring, tensions can arise between new residents and old. For over 20 years, MACLA has worked to resolve conflicts in order to solidify a community identity through the arts and community-wide events and to connect and support local businesses. Its ultimate goal has been to transform the Corridor into a thriving hub of activity. ■



Above: MACLA youth with Black Eyed Peas. Courtesy of photographer Steve Jennings.

Below: Youth looking on at the Navigations of the Fantastic exhibition. Courtesy of MACLA.



## Community Arts Organization: *Seniors Making Art*

**Location** • Washington

**Serving** • Older Adults

**Web** • [www.seniorsmakingart.org](http://www.seniorsmakingart.org)

**S**eniors Making Art founder, Dale Chihuly, believes that, “Making art is not about craftsmanship, it has to do with feelings and memories. Seniors have an abundance of both.” It was this sentiment and desire to improve the quality of life for older adults that led Chihuly to found Seniors Making Art in 1991, with the goal of helping seniors reflect on and share their life experiences through art.

Chihuly, an internationally-renowned glass artist, recognized the lack of outlets available to enable seniors to explore their artistic creativity in Seattle. He also recognized that the attributes of seniors are ideal for engagement in the arts. In its infancy, the program offered only three classes, but it has since worked with over 20,000 seniors, in 346 locations, and in 13 states. Depending on the availability of funding, the organization provides classes to at least 500 and to as many as 2,400 seniors, and offers from 50 to 150 courses annually. Nonprofit organizations in Washington State can host classes in Seniors Making Art for no charge, while all for-profit institutions and nonprofits in other states pay a modest fee of \$1,600. Organizations hosting a class are giving seniors the chance to learn new skills and capture their memories.

The program is flexible and has been adapted to a variety of venues, including assisted living communities, senior centers, art museums, and community centers. Because the artists are not full-time staff, offerings can fluctuate annually in response to funding availability, thereby limiting the risk of budget shortfalls. The organization has benefited greatly from Dale Chihuly’s renown, which draws senior organizations and artists to participate in Seniors Making Art, while also attracting the attention of sponsors.

Seniors in the program find new purpose and build new relationships with fellow artists, and for many participants the classes are just the beginning of their discovery, or rediscovery, of art. The program empowers older adults to pursue new and

A work from the Seniors Making Art program.  
Courtesy of Kim Weers.



meaningful activities that make marked improvements in their quality of life. The classes include creative writing, drawing, sculpture, ceramics, printmaking, glass mosaic, watercolor, calligraphy, music, photography, collage, poetry, memoir-writing, and more.

Seniors Making Art is funded through donations from a wide variety of individuals, corporations, and foundations, including the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Matching Program, Bank of America Charitable Foundation, and Citigroup Community Capital. Seniors praise it as an inexpensive and convenient way to increase both their creativity and wellness, while providing an opportunity to expand their social networks.

According to Julielyn Lakey, the executive director of Seniors Making Art, one student commented: “Taking this class has been one of the best offerings of my life. It is such a privilege to be taught something without the pressure of being graded or judged. It truly feels like a gift to not have to pay the usual high prices for such a class. I was a public school teacher, but had to resign because my husband, who has MS, was quadriplegic and I couldn’t do both jobs. Art gives me the positive feelings needed to balance my life<sup>4</sup>.” Given its innovative model and success, Seniors Making Art will continue to enhance the lives of older adults through art for years to come. ■



Above: A work from the Seniors Making Art program. Courtesy of Helen Boyer and The Kenney.

Left: A work from the Seniors Making Art program. Courtesy of Frances C. Gaiser.

## Community Development Corporation: *Casa Familiar*

**Location** • San Ysidro, California

**Serving** • Immigrants & Older Adults

**Web** • [www.casafamiliar.org](http://www.casafamiliar.org)

**H**ome to the nation's busiest United States-Mexico border crossing, San Ysidro is a suburb of San Diego, California, that lies just north of Tijuana, Mexico. Comprising mostly third- to first- generation immigrants, San Ysidro is often ignored, viewed as a place to pass through on the way to and from the border. Many San Ysidro-Tijuana families live in a bi-national condition, a state of being that finds families, work, education, affordable housing, health care, and economies tied to both nations, and one that is currently struggling with the hot spots of drug cartel violence. Casa Familiar, a San Ysidro-based nonprofit organization, is working to invigorate the community by advocating for and assisting the residents in such areas as immigration services, education, and job placement.<sup>5</sup>

While others see poverty in the housing developments in Tijuana's outer-ring neighborhoods, Teddy Cruz, an architect and professor at the University of California, San Diego, sees them as evidence that creative intelligence, and the participation of informal communities, can shape new forms of urban development. In Tijuana's hilly terrain, people transform their open spaces into social spaces, residences, and businesses, which are constructed using found materials—corrugated metal, discarded packing crates, and garage doors are cobbled together. Developments are painted in vivid colors; new floors and rooms are added when needed, and residents fit family-owned restaurants or businesses near and under houses that are very close to each other.<sup>6</sup>

Cruz appreciates the result, as it produces a lively and spirited landscape. Under Mexican law, once a new settlement is complete, it is protected from demolition. Cruz asserts that this approach is far more flexible and democratic than many currently accepted as models for urban development.

Shuttling back and forth across the border, Cruz sought to reproduce the vibrancy of Tijuana in San Diego's suburb, but struggled with initial development plans due to San Diego's strict building and zoning codes. Cruz was then offered an opportunity to work with Casa Familiar, and together with the organization developed the *Mi Pueblo Village Project* as a strategy for revitalizing the village. Cruz designed two innovative affordable housing developments for the *Village Project*, and created a new model for rebuilding San Diego's older neighborhoods. Casa Familiar is seeking approval, as of March 2012, of the two housing projects, which would support greater social interaction in *Mi Pueblo*. The two projects, *Living Rooms at the Border* and *Abuelitos Senior Gardens*, comprise 23 units of affordable housing, to be built in the oldest San Ysidro neighborhood. The neighborhood lies within a half-mile radius of the Casa Familiar campus, which includes its Social Service Center, Civic Center, Recreation and Fitness Center, and Community Design and Arts and Culture Center. The *Living Rooms* feature a "semipublic loggia as a micro-enterprise and arts development space as its centerpiece" and is a new development model that encourages innovative thinking about ways to build community

infrastructures that connect affordable housing to social, economic, and educational support systems.

*Abuelitos* is a design for housing grandparents who have custody of their grandchildren, a need that Casa Familiar identified through its Social Services Center. Cruz's designs inject themselves into the historic core of San Ysidro, and connect a range of housing, from affordable to more expensive, to existing informal access ways that serve as public open spaces. His designs incorporate affordable housing and represent a reconsideration of urbanism. They buck the trends of suburban pitched roofs, front porches, and lawns and strengthen the role that community-supported rebuilding can provide in the ring of suburbs around urban cores. Cruz develops these designs as an alternative to the plans for generic, urban developments that maximize density through unit counts, rather than socio-economic interactions.

Teddy Cruz recognizes that the many modifications of tract developments and shanty towns, made by residents of Tijuana, add character, a sense of place, and stimulate community pride in neighborhoods. His designs are devices to re-imagine housing in San Diego. With increasing numbers of middle-class immigrants moving to the suburbs in lieu of city centers, it is important to think about and address the needs of the new suburban demographic. By including informal networks of public space and architectural solutions that allow residents to modify their space to meet their own needs, Cruz's designs have encouraged planners and architects to rethink design approaches and to accommodate social interaction and mixed-use settings. Cruz's imaginative design for Casa Familiar's *Mi Pueblo* transforms it from a conventional neighborhood revitalization plan to one that weaves community infrastructure, support services, public spaces, and affordable housing into a colorful addition to San Ysidro. ■



Among other waste items, including garage doors and rubber tires, small, unwanted post-war bungalows are trucked from San Diego across the border into Tijuana for reuse; they are often set up above steel or concrete frames, becoming two-story buildings with space for a small business, or other uses below. This layered urbanization, plugging housing to other social services, was the inspiration for *Living Rooms at the Border*. Courtesy of photographer Goyo Ortiz and Estudio Teddy Cruz.

## Community Development Corporation: *International Sonoran Desert Alliance*

**Location** • Ajo, Arizona

**Serving** • Native Americans, Mexicans, and  
Caucasians

**Web** • [www.isdanet.org](http://www.isdanet.org)

**T**ensions run high in communities undergoing rapid change. In tiny Ajo, The International Sonoran Desert Alliance (ISDA) is trying to diminish potential conflict by using the arts and culture to ensure the town's economic survival and heal old ethnic wounds.

Ajo's challenges begin with its physical contrasts. With less than 4,000 residents, Ajo lies within the stunningly beautiful Sonoran Desert and 10,000 square miles of the hottest and most fragile ecosystem in North America. Ajo's traditional Spanish Plaza and lovely historic buildings reflect a Spanish Colonial Revival style. But amid this charm and natural splendor, a jarring reminder of the recent past scars the land: an abandoned copper mine, one of the biggest open pits in the United States. The mine is a visual representation of Ajo's legacy of segregation. As a mining town, the Native American, Mexican, and Anglo populations lived apart and social interaction was minimal. "The mining company owned everything and was very paternalistic," says ISDA Executive Director Tracy Taft. When Phelps Dodge closed the pit in 1985, she says, "People had no self-sufficiency, nothing to fall back on. And today there is still a severe lack of economic opportunity."

After the mine closure, two-thirds of Ajo's 9,000 residents left. The two segregated neighborhoods closest to the copper pit, Indian Village and Mexican Town, were leveled. In the 1990s the vacant homes of the mine's management were sold by Phelps Dodge to outsiders. The ISDA stepped in to support increased cooperation and understanding in this extremely diverse town. Operating in three nations, the United States, Mexico, and the Tohono O'odham reservation (which spans the U.S.-Mexico border), the Alliance was founded to establish the Sonoran Desert region (including Sonora, Mexico, and the Tohono O'odham Indian Nation) as a showcase for environmental excellence.

Ten years later, resources for environmental work had become scarce, and ISDA reinvented itself as a community-development organization with a commitment to the environment. To promote economic growth while inspiring the local population, ISDA chose to use the arts to build a sustainable local economy and an international center for arts and culture. Today, Ajo's Native Americans (10 percent), Mexicans (40 percent), and Anglos (50 percent) share the town with 200 U.S. border patrol agents and a few thousand northern U.S. and Canadian "snowbirds," who winter in Ajo. ISDA has proven to be up to the task of attracting artists and improving the environment—while making Ajo a more unified community.

To accomplish its goal, ISDA cobbled together \$8 million and bought the abandoned Curley School complex. It began renovating the eight historic buildings into artists' housing and studios, classrooms, a beautiful indoor-outdoor auditorium, an arts business incubator, computer lab, and community workshops. Early funding came from the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Christensen Fund, the Tohono O'odham Nation, and the Arizona Community Foundation. The major renovation was funded through a tax credit for low-income housing and nine sources of funding.

By fall 2007, ISDA had leased all 30 artists' lofts and began training artisans to create small businesses. Its *Shop Girls* program helped women use an array of power tools to create marketable products. A microenterprise center provided the variety of materials and tools needed by artists and for support of the activities of creative businesses. ISDA embraces arts and culture to build stronger relationships among the groups that had once been strictly segregated. In addition to hiring artists to create large murals reflecting Ajo's Native American culture, ISDA has sponsored an inter-ethnic festival to harvest memories and create a vision for a new and more inclusive Ajo. ISDA also produces an annual peace festival in cooperation with artists and school children from Mexico, the O'odham Nation, and the United States.

ISDA is capturing the history of Indian Village, Mexican Town, and the mining years through public art, to capture what must be remembered to preserve the town's identity and to heal old divisions. In this process, Ajo residents will decide what needs to be publicly remembered. "It may be the joy of the celebrations on the old plaza or the pain of having their homes torn down," Taft says. For Taft, who bought one of the mine homes in 1992, the stakes couldn't be higher. "Big cities often experience population dynamics," she says. "But small towns die if someone doesn't come up with a new development strategy." ■



Courtesy of the International Sonoran Desert Alliance.



## Community Garden: *Nuestras Raíces*

**Location** • Holyoke, Massachusetts

**Serving** • Immigrants

**Web** • [www.nuestras-raices.org](http://www.nuestras-raices.org)

**H**olyoke, a city of 40,000 located in Western Massachusetts and seated along the Connecticut River, has a 40 percent Puerto Rican population. Although the Puerto Rican population in Holyoke today lives in an urban environment, many first-generation residents grew up on the farms of Puerto Rico. Nuestras Raíces created a network of community gardens throughout the city to preserve cultural heritage and create a sense of pride and place, while producing nutritious and healthy food for the community. Members of an experienced older generation of farmers have the opportunity to educate the younger generation, while improving the community's well-being.

Nuestras Raíces, a community-based organization, began in the early 1990s as an urban garden and farm initiative, and has expanded into a multi-service organization. It offers such programs as youth development, workforce training, urban gardening and agriculture, GED programs, arts and cultural activities that include mural projects and music performances, and much more. Members of Holyoke's first community garden, La Finquita, managed the garden with the goal of developing a greenhouse in downtown Holyoke.

The goal became a reality when members of La Finquita purchased the land and building for the headquarters of Nuestras Raíces, Centro Agrícola. Afterwards, renovations were made to the building to create a usable bakery, an education center, a greenhouse, and a restaurant. The Centro Agrícola includes an outdoor plaza, a restaurant space, a shared-use community kitchen, a bilingual library, and meeting space. The plaza of the Centro Agrícola was designed by the youth of the Protectores de la Tierra program and guided by Architect Tullio Inglese. It is modeled after the town centers of Puerto Rico and Latin America, featuring a fountain, demonstration gardens, tropical flowers, and café-style seating for the restaurant. The plaza hosts outdoor events such as flower shows, music events, and festivals.

To increase the number of gardens, Nuestras Raíces purchased more land. Each garden was assigned a coordinator to manage the family plots, assign tasks, and create a set of rules. A Nuestras Raíces board member invited youth to participate, eventually creating a youth leadership team composed of 20 members, who create murals, mentor younger members, and manage designated youth plots in the various community gardens. The relationship between youth and older adults in Holyoke was strengthened significantly by the community gardens.



What was once an abandoned and littered lot is now a vivid source of community interaction and cooperation for fresh and sustainable products. Courtesy of Nuestras Raíces.

The *Nuestras Raíces Youth Program* offers a paid salary as well as training in leadership. Additionally, a place for education, sense of pride, and celebration of heritage is provided through the community gardens. Youth who were formerly “troublesome” become active in community empowerment. The vacant lots of Holyoke, now used for gardening, were once filled with garbage, unsafe debris, and the remains of demolished buildings. They caused health problems for residents, particularly children, negatively impacted community pride, precluded investment, and created spaces for criminal activities. An additional program is the *Nuestras Raíces Radio Show*, which provides a weekly talk show on the issues significant to the organization, and updates on projects and events.

Lastly, Nuestras Raíces is a founding member of the Holyoke Food & Fitness Policy Council (HFFPC), which was selected, in a competitive process, for continued 10-year funding by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. The Council was chosen for its demonstrated commitment to collaboration, and capacity to transform the food and fitness environments of Holyoke. HFFPC is a collaborative effort led by Nuestras Raíces and the Holyoke Health Center, and includes nearly 60 partner agencies, community residents, and youth leaders from the Holyoke Youth Commission.

Holyoke Food & Fitness envisions unified, community-based change that creates access for families and children to healthy foods and fitness opportunities and confronts underlying conditions of poverty, blight, and social injustice. HFFPC focuses on restoring food systems that provide access for all residents to affordable and healthy foods, school wellness programs that address childhood obesity, policy advocacy for school reform, safe walking routes to school, and the built environment, which features a youth and community-run bicycle shop that prepares residents of every age to build and ride bikes.

The diverse community, arts, and health programs of Nuestras Raíces have sparked the interest of neighbors and community members of all ages. They are transforming Holyoke’s formerly blighted areas of the community into healthy and active spaces where both gardens and relationships thrive. ■

## Council on Aging: *The Wartburg Council for Creative Aging*

**Location** • Mt. Vernon, New York

**Serving** • Older Adults

**Web** • [www.thewartburg.org](http://www.thewartburg.org)

**T**he Wartburg Adult Care Community (The Wartburg) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to nurturing the mind, body, and spirit of older adults. Since its founding in 1899, The Wartburg has offered a continuum of care at its Mt. Vernon campus, and provides outreach to local parishes, senior centers, and civic organizations. In 2010, The Wartburg received a grant to enlist the aid of Lifetime Arts, which consults with many organizations on the design and implementation of creative aging programs and is led by a teaching artist. Lifetime Arts completed a survey of the Wartburg's senior residents and staff, designed to gauge their interest in the arts. The findings were clear—residents and staff desired more arts and cultural programming.



Residents participate in the African drumming circle class. Courtesy of The Wartburg Council.

In 2011, The Wartburg Council for Creative Aging was established to allow its nearly 500 senior residents in the assisted living, memory care, skilled nursing residence, and adult day programs to express themselves through art, song, theater, poetry, and oral histories. In difficult financial times, launching the Council required some

creativity. Fortunately, the Council discovered a unique method for both cutting costs and serving the community; The Wartburg's common rooms were vacant at night, while artists in the community were paying high rents for studio space. Ann Frey, the director of the Council, began recruiting teaching artists to use The Wartburg's space in the evening as art studios, free of rent. In exchange, the artists were asked to teach classes to the older adult residents.

After completing its first successful year, the Council has planned, developed, and launched its program and has hired several teaching artists for visual, instrumental, and choral arts, and has promoted self-expression through development of oral histories. Frey says that the unique bartering system comports with The Wartburg's longstanding mission, to offer dignity and hope to older adults and their caregivers, while continuing to play an important role in the community of Mt. Vernon. In addition to individual artists, the Council has partnered with art classes. One such art class had been spending 60 percent of its income on rent, but 100 percent of its income is now used for the class, a win-win for all.

One of the most popular art classes offered is an African drumming circle, though during its first week it was a challenge because some of the adult day program members were hesitant. But by the second week, the drumming circles had captured the residents' attention, and the circles became a permanent program to which residents look forward each week. In addition to rehearsal space, the local drumming teacher needed a place to store the drums. As they are now kept at The Wartburg, residents have regular access to the instruments.

Additional classes include acrylic painting and choral classes. Computer classes have been added for residents, some coordinated by an Americorps volunteer. The Council is still in its infancy and growing rapidly. Director Ann Frey recently attended a conference on creative aging to help make sure that the program can achieve its goals. The Council provides an opportunity for self-expression, lifelong learning, fun, a sense of accomplishment, and self-esteem for residents, many of whom have cognitive or physical impairments.

Additionally, The Wartburg joined the National Center for Creative Aging to avail itself of the educational resources that the Center provides. Challenges include managing the program across multiple buildings on the campus and ensuring that the residents' unique needs are met. Planning is in progress to offer arts festivals at The Wartburg's campus, featuring the work of residents, teaching artists and community members. The Wartburg Council will also extend opportunities for partnerships to other community organizations within and outside the arts community. The long-term plan for the Wartburg Council for Creative Aging is to develop an intergenerational component. ■

## Dance Company: *Dances For A Variable Population*

Location • New York, New York

Serving • Older Adults

Web • [www.naomigoldberghaas.com](http://www.naomigoldberghaas.com)

**D**ancers dressed in vibrant red move across The High Line, an elevated historic rail line turned public park in Manhattan's West Side, enticing passersby to stop and look at the beautiful performance. Half of the dancers seem to be young, fit, and professionally trained. The other half move more slowly, some dancing in place, and some sitting. In fact, they are all older adults.



Dancers in White.  
Courtesy of  
photographer Meg  
Goldman.

Dance artist Naomi Goldberg Haas founded and directs Dances For A Variable Population (DVP), a dance company whose goal is to erase the borders between dancers and audience through its unique choreography and dance company, comprising adults 24 to 82 years of age. Haas enjoys site-specific dance performances, which place the audience and dancers of all ages in the same space. She says, “[In these] new conceptions of shared space, we celebrate how dance can be a vehicle for wellness and expression for seniors, persons with disabilities, youth, and regular folk; how dance can change from an ‘under-

exposed’ art form in a community to become an active tool for community participation, enthusiasm, and social interaction.”

Haas founded DVP in 2005, to offer seniors the opportunity to dance, not only as recreation, but as a form of exercise and wellness. Soon it became evident to Haas that older adult dancers offered a new opportunity to explore choreography. By incorporating moves that accommodate the older dancers’ physical limitations, Haas translates her pieces into new and expressive dance forms. Haas states about older adult dancers: “Years lived give us opportunity to be more of ourselves.”

DVP’s *Autumn Crossing on the High Line* was The High Line’s first public, open-air dance performance, and demonstrated community support for the refurbished public park. From 1934 to 1980, The High Line, New York City’s 1.5 mile-long, elevated freight rail line, was used to ship goods to warehouses and factories and ran through the middle of some buildings. In its period of disuse in the 1980s and 1990s, the City considered demolishing the rail line, but in 1999 neighborhood residents joined together to save it. In the spirit of the community’s transformative role, the dancers were asked to perform in the newly finished public space. Seniors from the local neighborhood, along with professional dancers, participated in a performance that figuratively and literally brought the community closer.

*“Theaters will say that they can’t do without older audiences. But ask them if they hire older actors, and they will be much more equivocal.”*

—Robert Drake, Artistic Director, The Academy Theatre

Founder Haas is a dance artist who has worked in concert, dance, theater, opera, and film. Through her directorship, DVP has won critical acclaim for performances at New York City theaters, the Y, public schools, outdoor festivals, and public parks, and has produced site-specific performances at a Staten Island Ferry Terminal and in New York City’s Times Square. The *Los Angeles Times* says of Haas that, “[She] has an ability to translate ideas, themes, emotions and text into kinetic terms. She gives it discipline and precision, but her work is suffused with emotional life.” DVP showcases young and old modern dancers performing successfully with one another. Haas says that adjusting to the physical limitations and capacities of the older dancers has expanded her own choreography skills.



Dancers on the High Line. Courtesy of photographer Cristina Macaya.

In addition to concert work, the company has developed distinctive classes and workshop programs for community collaborations designed for a range of populations. In the fall 2008, DVP initiated *Dances for Seniors*, which brought classes to eight downtown senior centers that engaged its participants as both audience members and performers. The classes are led by Haas and company members of DVP, and focus on the way dance is built from personal stories, and to encourage seniors to enjoy dance as a means for expression, wellness, and celebration.

Admission to the classes is offered free of charge through the support of the Manhattan Community Arts Funds, the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, and the Harlem Arts Alliance. In its first year of the program, over 350 older adults participated in *Dances for Seniors*, and in some of the senior centers the classes were translated into Spanish and Chinese. In 2009, the program expanded to include uptown Manhattan and Harlem, and currently provides over 650 older adults with programming.

Additionally, DVP offers low-cost classes to seniors through its *Movement Speaks* program in downtown Manhattan dance studios, uptown Y locations, and through a long-term commitment at a citizens care center in Harlem. Classes culminate in public collaborative dance performances in which senior participants are joined with company dancers. Dances For A Variable Population breaks seniors out of their shell, and encourages them to realize their innate ability to connect through motion and physicality, despite their physical challenges or disabilities.

DVP teaching artist Ani Javian says, “During these dance and dance/fitness workshops with DVP’s *Movement Speaks* program, the truest, simplest, and finest elements of dance shine through. These older dancers produce movement that scorns pretention and celebrates life. They carry in their bodies a lifetime of experiences, yet they learn certain concepts for the first time. I leave these sessions confident that dance has bettered the world.” Dances For A Variable Population has proven that its unique approach to dance emphasizes a new cohesion between young and old in society, and is joyful for both the audience and performers. ■

## Dance Company: *Deeply Rooted Dance Theater*

**Location** • Chicago, Illinois

**Serving** • Older Adults

**Web** • [www.deeplyrootedproductions.org](http://www.deeplyrootedproductions.org)

**F**ounded in 1995 by dancers Kevin Iega Jeff and Gary Abbott, Deeply Rooted Dance Theater teaches and performs dance as creative expression and community and spiritual healing. Jeff calls it “world class art from a grassroots perspective.”

Working within an African American dance aesthetic, Deeply Rooted explores topics as varied as the Somali civil war and famine, the quest to live in the face of AIDS, and early twentieth-century African American cultures. Jeff and Abbott’s choreography stresses both technical virtuosity and the deep exploration of character and community. As one dancer explains regarding Deeply Rooted’s *Life*, which deals with personal struggles to live with AIDS, “I know I’m telling experiences of things I see every day. Right outside these doors, there’s some things about this piece that are going on.”

Staged in various venues throughout Chicago, the ensemble’s performances attract a diverse audience. Dance connoisseurs attend, but so do people who are not typically patrons of dance, but who find something uniquely cathartic and revealing in the ensemble’s performances. From the beginning, community outreach and teaching have been as much a part of Deeply Rooted as the ensemble performances. The company works with partners both in and outside Chicago to develop customized, community-oriented dance programs.

The company provides dance education for a continuum of talents and personal goals. The staff offers rigorous trainings for aspiring professional dancers and experienced dancers interested in working within an ensemble structure, open by audition, as well as youth dance classes and open dance classes available on a weekly basis. Personal exploration is as integral to the company’s dance pedagogy as it is to its performance philosophy. It made perfect sense for Jeff and Abbott to develop a new dance program based on feedback from audience members. “A lot of women who came to our performances were telling us how intimate and powerful it was for them,” says Jeff. “They wanted to experience that.”

In January 2007, Deeply Rooted launched *Mature H.O.T. Women*, a dance class geared toward baby boomers and active older adults. The program’s spirit is captured in its acronym: “Health-conscious, Optimistic, Triumphant.” Deeply Rooted now holds four eight-week sessions of *Mature H.O.T. Women* each year. Sessions are offered during the evening, attracting both retirees and women who

are in the workforce. The classes are held at Deeply Rooted's dance studio in downtown Chicago and in the predominantly African American neighborhood of South Shore. Each weekly two-hour class has extended warm-up and cool-down periods. The class is open to all ages, but the core participants are 45 to 75 years of age.

More than 100 women have participated since the program began three years ago. At the end of each session, the students have the opportunity to perform with one another. Deeply Rooted also weaves the students into its other programs and its professional ensemble. In 2009, several students performed with the dance company as part of a featured performance. Several other students also performed with *Up Close & Personal*, a Deeply Rooted outreach program that is offered at different community venues to allow people to see the artistic process unfold.

Now Deeply Rooted is considering replicating the program in other parts of the country. A partner group has expressed interest in offering the program. ■



Mature H.O.T.\* Women dancer Carmel Louis (\*Health-conscious, Optimistic, Triumphant). Courtesy of photographer Mike Manley.

## Dance Company: *Ollimpaxqui Ballet Company*

Location • Dallas, Texas

Serving • Immigrants

Web • [www.mexballet.com](http://www.mexballet.com)

Originally from Mexico City, Eduardo Gutierrez started Ollimpaxqui in Dallas 25 years ago. He explains that, “When we started in 1985, the Spanish-speaking population in Dallas was not that big. Most of the audience members were Anglo. Then about 15 years ago there started to be more Hispanic teachers and they wanted to have a program in the schools representing their culture. When we asked the audience 20 years ago, ‘How many of you speak Spanish?’, only a few people would raise their hands. Now about 70 percent of our audience members speak Spanish.” Gutierrez says that part of the performances include explanations of the costumes and the meaning of the dances. He notes that, “We get them doing Colombian dances, [and] Latin rhythms.”

Ollimpaxqui is a bilingual dance program; the dances are explained and interpreted in both English and Spanish for students from ages six to 18. The company mixes ballet and folklorico dances to increase the comfort of students and adults with “high” dance forms, through mixing in folk dance and showing how the forms interrelate. The program is promoted through word of mouth, mostly by teachers. The dance company currently comprises eight dancers and three musicians. Gutierrez, the artistic director and a program director manage the company. Gutierrez estimates that they spend 30 to 40 percent of their time in Dallas and the rest traveling. Ollimpaxqui is funded in Dallas by a City of Dallas Department of Cultural Affairs grant, school-system funding through Big Thought, and audience fees.

In their early years in Dallas, the company performed mostly Mexican dance for an Anglo and then Anglo/African American audience. As the audiences became more Hispanic, they wanted a broader range of dances. Ollimpaxqui started a *Dancing Through Latin America* program that features dances from many different cultures of Latin America, including, but not limited to, Mexico.

Now this traveling dance company completes more than 300 performances and 150 workshops each year throughout the United States and the world, mostly in schools. Dance is a form of release for the students. Whether they are a mostly Caucasian group of students or a largely Latino audience of students in the City of Dallas, artistic director Eduardo Gutierrez leads them in a highly physical, whimsical, and accessible way through various Latin American folklorico dance styles that make them scream, laugh, and move.

Whatever the make-up of his audience—whether it is a mostly white group of children in Maine or a largely Mexican American audience in Dallas public schools—the company interprets the dances in both English and Spanish and mixes folklorico and ballet. Asking the audience to be hands on, to join the performers, can add immeasurably to the pleasure of both and mixing cultures and genres can be both educational and entertaining. No matter the ethnic or racial identity of children, their exposure to the arts of many cultures enhances their appreciation for their astounding complexity and range. ■



The Ollimpaxqui Ballet Company dancers perform a Mexican Spectacular Show encompassing centuries of traditions that have evolved from European, Oriental, Indian, and American influences. Courtesy of the Ollimpaxqui Ballet Company, Inc.

## Department Store: OASIS

Location • National  
Serving • Older Adults  
Web • [www.oasisnet.org](http://www.oasisnet.org)

With over 35,000 participants each year and over 30 years of experience, OASIS is one of the most successful and experienced groups in the country that serves older adults. Headquartered in St. Louis, Missouri, OASIS works with national partners such as AT&T, Sam's Club, the WellPoint Foundation, and the National Council on Aging. OASIS aspires to promote successful aging through lifelong learning, health programs, and volunteer engagement. Focused on those 50 and over, OASIS fosters their independence and continued engagement in their communities.

OASIS was established in 1982 as a public-private partnership with May Department Stores (now Macy's). Initial funding was provided by The U.S. Administration on Aging, while May's provided space for older adult education programs in four locations (St. Louis, Baltimore, Los Angeles, and Cleveland). The program was an immediate success, and after a two-year trial, May's committed to more locations. Since that time, OASIS has entered into new partnerships and developed new offerings that help older adults live healthy and fulfilling lives. OASIS now offers programs in 40 cities across the country.

Many OASIS programs bring older adults and children together—for the benefit of both. *CATCH Healthy Habits* recruits older volunteers to help teach students, kindergarten through fifth grade, about healthful eating habits. They also lead fun activities to get both young and old moving. To enhance reading skills, the *Intergenerational Tutoring* program matches senior volunteers, as tutors and mentors, with elementary school students. OASIS offers training and a syllabus for tutors, eliminating pressures that sometimes discourage older adults from participating in tutoring programs. The program has been very successful, reaching over 400,000 elementary students, 90 percent of whom showed a marked increase in reading ability. The *Intergenerational Tutoring* program is offered at no charge, greatly reducing barriers for financially-stretched school systems. In addition to helping young people, older volunteers often find work with children fulfilling. They enjoy being around youngsters and take pleasure in the progress they make.

The OASIS program, *Living a Healthy Life: Chronic Disease Self-Management*, comprises six-week courses that supplement regular treatment for diabetes, respiratory problems, cardiac disease, and other chronic conditions. The program, developed by Stanford University, is designed for those seeking to manage more than one of these conditions. The *Active Start* program helps seniors ward off chronic conditions by educating participants about healthy activity levels and preparing them to exercise daily on their own. *Active Start* has met with many accolades, including the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Innovation in Prevention Award in 2006, and a commendation in *Gerontologist* for its success in changing behaviors and improving health through increased activity levels.

The OASIS *Connections* program offers courses designed to help older adults learn word processing, and the use of cell phones, email, and the Internet. The classes assist older adults to master skills that can make them more valuable to their current employers, or enable them to pursue new employment opportunities. This can be a great boon to local economies, which gain an experienced labor pool with up-to-date skill sets. Many of the program's 6,000 participants are lower income, and new skills can increase their access to jobs with higher wages.

One of the participants in San Antonio's OASIS program, Aines Maza, praises its role in her life. She says that, "The Tai Chi and yoga classes help me with my inner peace, strength in mind, body, and spirit. I love Zumba for my cardio health. And I love meeting new faces and making new friends."

The planning and implementation of OASIS programs are informed by theory, evidence, application, and evaluation. Nearly every program establishes benchmarks, and surveys are completed for assessment of health outcomes, job performance, and other measures of success to ensure that initiatives are effective. With these data, OASIS is able to change programs that are less successful and build upon approaches that have positive outcomes. This data is also valuable in recruiting partners and obtaining funding.

Through innovative program development, strong partnerships, and dedication to enhancing the lives of older adults, OASIS has maximized and leveraged its resources to improve the lives of thousands of older adults and children throughout the country. As OASIS continues to grow, it will be guided by its long experience and leadership in redefining life after 50, and help older adults actively—and visibly—contribute to the vitality of their communities. ■

## Elementary School: *Intergenerational Programs in Rochester Public Schools*

**Location** • Rochester, New Hampshire

**Serving** • Older Adults

**Web** • [www.rochesterschools.com](http://www.rochesterschools.com)

**R**ecess for seniors may sound unusual, but it is just one of many volunteer roles that the Rochester School District's Office of Extended School Programs has developed to increase community involvement in its elementary schools. The Rochester School Department defines as its goal the enhanced achievement and academic success of students who participate in extended-school programs. Volunteers play a key role in support of these programs. The Office organizes enrichment programs by sharing resources, creating partnerships with businesses and community organizations, and involving parents.

These programs have proven to be a boon to both students and volunteers, many of whom are older adults. Intergenerational activities benefit senior volunteers, who take pleasure in giving back to their communities and participating in a structured social environment. They often exult in the joy of working with children.

To increase community involvement in Rochester's School District, The Office of Extended School Programs established a volunteer branch in 1999, which is successful because it continually adjusts to changes in the schools and available resources. Through the program, 60 community partnerships have been formed, to include such companies as JC Penney, Citizens Bank, Harvey's Bakeries, Inc., and the Riverside Rest Home.

The Office's volunteer branch accommodates students and volunteers by taking into account the schedules of both. The commitment of volunteers ranges from one to two hours each week and some take on more hours, depending on their availability. The Office does not limit volunteers to specific programs, and is open to the creative use of their time. For instance, many teachers bring parents into the classroom to read or participate in other activities.

Some volunteers read to students during breakfast and lunch, encouraging students to relax and avoid getting too wound up. Others have specific titles, such as library volunteers, who help keep school libraries organized and share their love of reading by aiding students with book selection. Some older adults help out during recess, and organize and participate in games. Older volunteers also assist with after-school activities, to include coaching with homework, and playing games such as Scrabble, Parcheesi, and Monopoly.

Intergenerational activities, like those offered by the Rochester School District, are welcomed by many seniors, who may not have the chance to spend as much time with children and other young people as they would like. Retirees are a great fit for the program, as they have free time during school hours when volunteers are needed most. Cathy Boston, the program director, points out that many families are scattered across the country, even more than they have been in the past; many children have few opportunities to interact with grandparents. Senior volunteers help fill this gap, thereby changing perceptions of older adults. They teach younger generations to respect and appreciate their elders, and confirm for them the value of intergenerational relationships. ■

## Faith-Based Organization: *LIVE (Lifelong Involvement for Vital Elders)*

**Location** • Parsippany, Caldwell, and Verona,  
New Jersey

**Serving** • Older Adults

**Web** • [www.ujcnj.org](http://www.ujcnj.org)

**N**orthern New Jersey's LIVE (Lifelong Involvement for Vital Elders), an initiative of United Jewish Communities of Metro West New Jersey (UJC), works with local leaders to make the communities it serves better places in which to grow older. LIVE organizes recreational activities and personal-development programs that help older adults stay active and involved in their communities, thereby helping them to age in place and continue to contribute to their communities well into their older years. The activities offered by LIVE include yoga, Tai Chi, walking clubs, health workshops, and employment counseling. While LIVE is led by United Jewish Communities, it encourages participation from seniors of all ages and backgrounds.



The first LIVE program was established in 2004 in Parsippany, followed four years later by a second LIVE initiative in Caldwell, and in 2010 by a third in Verona. LIVE site coordinators conduct listening sessions with older residents, plan services, and coordinate service delivery through partnerships, which include nonprofits, public libraries, Offices on Aging, community centers, municipalities, places of worship, area universities, and hospitals. Through this broad network, LIVE coordinates participation by its partners and launches new programs for targeted populations. Resident councils, with

members from various religious, cultural, and ethnic groups, advise LIVE's program staff.

Among other services, LIVE provides fitness classes to older adults that provide opportunities for social engagement, in addition to promoting physical fitness and overall health. Courtesy of Mountainside Hospital.

LIVE has developed a varied menu of programs and services. A workshop on *Going Green for Less Green* (addressing finances, recycling, and healthy cooking) is an imaginative combination of subjects that are very relevant to seniors. Co-sponsored by the Interfaith Ministerial Association, *Caring for One Another* informs participants about ways to make an effective visit with an older person. Additionally, programs include senior walkability studies, and state-endorsed and evidence-based health promotion and wellness classes for older adults, such as *Move Today* and *Take Control of Your Health*.

The comprehensive array of programs also includes a focus on increasing home safety, improving memory, training seniors to use public transportation, enrolling in Medicare Part D, and enhancing the coping skills of caregivers. Many of these services are coordinated by a community-based social worker and senior employment specialist. LIVE has also worked with transit authorities to create new bus stops and expand service to

include Saturdays, and has developed transportation guides for seniors. A more recent expansion of programming includes comprehensive home-safety assessments.

Because much of its work is conducted through partnerships with stakeholders, LIVE ensures outside support for its initiatives to increase their effectiveness. For many initiatives, in fact, LIVE maintains a “transition to community sustainability” policy, which requires transfers of LIVE initiatives to partner institutions, which will continue to provide services without support from LIVE. LIVE is more focused on using existing resources to make communities more livable for older adults than it is on providing them on a continuing basis.

Each year LIVE works directly with over 2,000 older adults across the three communities it serves. In Parsippany alone, employment counselors helped over 120 older adults find jobs, and counseled hundreds more, while weekly wellness offerings engaged as many as 100 seniors in exercise and health-promotion programs.

Direct services, however, are only a small portion of LIVE’s impact, as much of the organization’s programming focuses on physical and social infrastructure changes to make communities more hospitable to older adults. Yearly surveys of participants confirm great satisfaction and appreciation for LIVE’s work on behalf of older adults. LIVE has also been recognized by the communities it serves. In December 2009, for example, the mayor of Parsippany recognized LIVE for improving the quality of life for the Township’s seniors.

The initial development of LIVE in Parsippany was made possible through a federal demonstration grant from the U.S. Administration on Aging, with matching funds from the Wallerstein Foundation for Geriatric Life Improvement, the Grotta Fund for Senior Care and the United Jewish Appeal. Subsequent efforts in Caldwell and Verona were supported by the Partners for Health Foundation and the United Way.

Today, the LIVE program partners with a number of organizations, including a variety of Jewish agencies, as well as municipal and county groups, such as the Morris County Division on Aging, the Essex County Department of Senior Services, the Township of Parsippany/Troy Hills, the Borough of Caldwell, and the Township of Verona. In addition to expanding geographically, the program is expanding its services, providing more in-home support, and transportation services for older adults.

LIVE has grown a great deal since its inception, and will continue to provide new services and support to help older adults age in place and remain a valuable asset to the communities in which they live. With LIVE, older residents feel less confined to their homes, and continue to contribute to their communities. ■

## Historic Preservation: *Cornerstones Community Partnerships*

**Location** • Santa Fe, New Mexico  
**Serving** • Immigrants  
**Web** • [www.cstones.org](http://www.cstones.org)

**B**ecause it is a city with an extraordinary cultural heritage, preservation of Santa Fe's historic public buildings is imperative, as is making that heritage relevant to Santa Fe's youth today. The built environment of the Southwest is testament to the endurance and majesty of its time-honored architecture. The centuries-old adobe structures, built by the city's forebears, are integral to the character of Santa Fe.



Youth making bricks at an on-site historical preservation project. Courtesy of Cornerstone Community Partnerships and photographer Anna Rutins.

Cornerstones Community Partnerships, a nonprofit organization located in Santa Fe, has built a national reputation for using historic preservation as the foundation for revitalizing communities and sustaining cultural values. Cornerstones was founded in 1986, as part of the New Mexico Community Foundation, to support traditional building practices as a way to celebrate Santa Fe's past. A city of just over 62,000, Santa Fe has a small Native American population, and a large Mexican American immigrant population. Cornerstones employs a community-based approach to the preservation of historic structures, integrating historic preservation with apprenticeships for at-risk youths; on-the-job adult training; the promotion of community collaborations; and economic development through tourism. Hands-on training and experience provide youth with a unique education in the techniques of historical preservation, as well as familiarity with community projects.

The organization has coordinated several intensive training programs, in partnership with the New Mexico Department of Labor, to impart marketable skills that increase the employability, as well as life and social skills, of young people. An important component of the training is exposure to the leaders in the communities, acting as mentors, who teach traditional skills and their



Courtesy of Cornerstone Community Partnerships and photographer Anna Rutins.

significance in the history and culture of the society. Cornerstones has also provided well-paid summer jobs for high school youth through foundation funding.

One unique project pairs Cornerstones' young participants with the two Zuni stonecutters who survive, so they can pass on centuries-old masonry techniques. Young people learn techniques that restore some of the buildings' most significant features, thereby providing them a greater appreciation for their cultural heritage.

Since its founding, Cornerstones has provided hundreds of rural Hispanic and Native American communities, throughout New Mexico, Colorado, Arizona, and Texas, with technical assistance for restoring their historic structures as a means for preserving the rich cultural heritage unique to this region. Over 50 major restoration projects have been successfully completed. Communities provide some funding for materials and recruit volunteers for carpentry, laying adobes and mud plastering, or for cooking. Each group supplies what it can. Projects succeed when members of the community take charge and demonstrate to their own satisfaction that they have the requisite skills.

To accomplish its work, Cornerstones partners with several national organizations. They include the National Park Foundation, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and the U.S. National Committee of the International Council on Monuments and Sites.

Early recognition for Cornerstones and support from local public officials was crucial to its lasting success. The great generosity of area businesses ensured the completion of Cornerstones' first project, restoring the San Jose de Rociada Arriba. This once-condemned church has again become the center of the community. The work at Upper Rociada illustrates Cornerstones' practice of becoming members of, and partners with, the communities where it works. Cornerstones' projects are sterling examples of the conditions essential to sustaining and improving community life. Incorporating young and old, skilled and unskilled, Cornerstones has allowed thousands in New Mexico to participate in rebuilding and restoring their communities. Jake Barrow, Cornerstones' technical director, explains that the elders of the community, with their knowledge and experience, provide real guidance—while Cornerstones provides support. ■

## Historical Society: *Norwood Park Historical Society*

**Location** • Norwood Park, Illinois

**Serving** • Older Adults

**Web** • [www.norwoodparkhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.norwoodparkhistoricalsociety.org)

The vision of the Norwood Park Historical Society (NPHS) is to be “recognized as a leader, educator, advocate, and resource” in the community of Norwood Park that “values and preserves its historic character and is acknowledged as an area of historical importance to the city of Chicago and the region.” To reach out to older adults, the NPHS launched *Voices of Norwood Park*, a personal-history project designed to educate older adults about methods for recording their histories and for collecting written and oral histories of their lives and times in Norwood Park.

Norwood Park is one of the oldest, most distinctive, and historically important neighborhoods in the Chicago metropolitan area. NPHS was formed in 1973 to preserve Norwood Park’s history and promote community awareness. The Society has transformed the oldest house in Chicago, which serves as its offices, into a multipurpose community center with a museum and a café. Its museum focuses on Chicago’s far-northwest side and has a growing collection of historical artifacts and research materials.

The Historical Society was created to advocate for the preservation of the unique character of Norwood Park, to include its historic architecture, open spaces, and streetscapes. The Society maintains archives related to Norwood Park, including its designation as a National Register historic district, and preserves the house as a community resource. The Society informs the community about the history of its members and local families, and is a resource for those seeking information about the community, its residents, businesses, and organizations. It also provides guidance on practices in historic preservation and restoration.

NPHS launched *Voices of Norwood Park* with an oral history and memoir-writing workshop co-sponsored by MatherLifeways, a Chicago organization whose purpose is to support myriad “ways to age well<sup>8</sup>.” The workshop was led by experts from the Chicago History Museum and Loyola University. *Voices* encouraged older adults to share their histories with the community and the larger world through a variety of NPHS offerings, including publications, exhibits, presentations, website

links, and intergenerational programs. Many who had lived in Norwood Park for decades showed great interest in *Voices*. Through *Voices*, older adults learned new skills, created personal histories for their own use, and contributed to recorded history. The program also gave older adults an opportunity to engage with new neighbors and discuss their memories of the neighborhood.

Several long-time residents, whose oral histories would make important contributions to the project, volunteered to develop them and to collect them from others. Even more exciting to the Society, many of these volunteers were new, and were undertaking their first major project. To practice interviewing techniques, those who enlisted in *Voices* worked from a sample list of questions. They then received their oral history assignments and were encouraged to schedule their own interviews. Participants have been pleased with their work, as neighbors became reacquainted and talked about their recollections of the neighborhood's past. The oral histories are invaluable to future Norwood Park residents, as they preserve many priceless memories.

Many models exist for gathering neighborhood histories. *Voices* is perhaps unique in that it is based on collaboration between two organizations, one dedicated to historic preservation, the other to enhancing the lives of older adults. Both are committed to preserving the character and heritage of the neighborhood and to creating a livable community for all ages. The visitors to NPHS are the beneficiaries, as they experience the personal histories and insights of residents who have lived in Norwood Park for many years. ■

## Local Government: *Pathways to Positive Aging*

**Location** • Tri-City Area, California

**Serving** • Older Adults

**Web** • [www.tceconline.org](http://www.tceconline.org)

**P**athways to Positive Aging (PPA) enriches the lives of seniors in the ethnically-diverse Tri-City Area (the cities of Fremont, Newark, and Union City) of Northern California. A partnership between the Tri-City Elder Coalition (TCEC) and the City of Fremont Human Services Department, Pathways to Positive Aging seeks to improve the quality of life for seniors through political advocacy and by leveraging existing resources to develop programs in transportation, community engagement, and health and wellness for older adults.

Pathways to Positive Aging is an advocacy and community-development partnership, created in 2004 with a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's *Community Partnerships for Older Adults*, to create and implement a strategic plan for older adults in the Tri-City Area. PPA is building a community that integrates seniors into the social and cultural dialogue and provides them with readily-accessible, culturally-sensitive, affordable, and effective services. PPA focuses on the availability and effective coordination of health and wellness for older adults. For example, through a partnership with the City of Fremont, PPA established the *Senior Help Line*, which provides Tri-City seniors and their families with a single resource enabling them to connect to local health, legal, and social services.

In order to accommodate the needs of all community members, the *Senior Help Line* provides multilingual services in Spanish, Mandarin, and Farsi, and also coordinates home visits, where the needs of seniors are assessed and matched with existing service providers. PPA also operates the *Falls Prevention Program*, which provides in-home support to help seniors remain safe and mobile in their homes for as long as possible. The Program coordinates home visits with nursing students from Unitek College, who help seniors initiate exercise regimens that maintain and improve mobility. In addition, the *Falls Prevention Program* arranges visits to seniors' homes by mobility experts from LIFE Eldercare, a service provider for older adults. They conduct home safety assessments and make simple modifications to reduce the risk of falls and give homebound seniors an added measure of safety.

Another PPA initiative, the *Mobile Mental Health Program*, also makes home visits that provide mental-health assessments and emotional support for seniors, an invaluable service for those suffering from isolation and dementia. The *Board and Care Program* has been created to enhance 120 existing Residential Care Facilities



Above: "Strategic Community Dialogue."

Left: Mom and daughter mobile mental health program.

Courtesy of Pathways to Positive Aging.



for the Elderly (RCFEs). Each RCFE houses between four and 10 seniors, and collectively they serve a total of over 1,000 seniors in the Tri-City Area. Pathways to Positive Aging hopes to improve this service by educating RCFE owners and operators, to better prepare them to address the health, nutritional, and emotional needs of RCFE residents.

PPA's mobility-focused work helps seniors get out of the house to run errands, visit doctors, and to ensure that seniors have access to other services. Mobility can be the missing link in the opportunities available to older adults. Programs supported by Pathways to Positive Aging include free classes, offered by public transportation authorities, on navigating local transit options. *VIP Rides*, run by LIFE Eldercare, provides volunteers to accompany seniors on paratransit services, helping them get on and off the bus, carry groceries, and communicate with the driver.

With a Caucasian minority, and large East Asian, Indian, and Afghan populations, the Tri-City Area is one of the most ethnically diverse areas in the country. As such, much of PPA's work is focused on bridging cultural and language barriers, to ensure that senior Tri-City residents have a full understanding of and access to area services. PPA's *Afghan Health Promotion Program* reaches out to older members of the Tri-City Area's sizable Afghan population, to help them understand, develop, and reach health-related goals. Another culturally-focused initiative, the *Community Ambassador Program for Seniors (CAPS)*, recruits community ambassadors to reach out to seniors in a variety of ethnic and faith-based groups in the Tri-City Area. The CAPS program allows PPA to close cultural and linguistic gaps, and connect underserved seniors with vital social services.

With plans for hospital-to-home transition care, Pathways to Positive Aging continues to grow in scope and impact. Its success results from a focus on maximizing the effectiveness of existing services and forming new relationships among community service providers to fill holes in existing support. PPA's culturally-sensitive approaches ensure that area residents of all backgrounds are supported by the community. ■

## Local Government: *Sarasota County Openly Plans for Excellence (SCOPE)*

**Location** • Sarasota County, Florida

**Serving** • Older Adults

**Web** • [www.scopexcel.org](http://www.scopexcel.org)

**S**arasota County Openly Plans for Excellence's (SCOPE) mission is to connect and inspire citizens to create a better community. A private nonprofit, SCOPE is a convener, catalyst and facilitator, partnering with residents to generate collective action around issues affecting quality of life. It is fitting that Sarasota County, as the oldest in the nation and with 30 percent of its residents over 65, focuses considerable attention on aging. Founded in 2001, SCOPE collaborates with Sarasota County residents, elected officials, and community organizations to support broad-based undertakings led by citizens, to solve a variety of community concerns. Initiatives have addressed the environment, transportation, family violence, community change, and the needs of aging residents, to name just a few. All SCOPE activities address issues that strongly influence the quality of life in Sarasota County.

With Sarasota County's large older adult population, it is not surprising that SCOPE's perspective on aging is both positive and constructive. Sarasota County views its older adults as assets to and active participants in the community. In 2005, to examine the consequences of aging, the opportunities, and challenges, SCOPE launched the initiative *Aging: The Possibilities*. Over 900 residents participated in many discussions, and presentations by experts covered a range of issues relevant to community planning for aging residents—and on their great capacity for enhancing the quality of life in Sarasota County.

The results of *Aging: the Possibilities* strengthened SCOPE's ability to engage Sarasota County in community building informed by a clear understanding of the potential of its older residents. The creation of *The Institute for the Ages* and the *Winter Forum* were two very successful outcomes. *The Institute* was created by SCOPE and a diverse steering committee of local leaders from the private and public sectors, higher education, and senior services. *The Institute* was endorsed by county leaders, elected officials, residents, and local, regional, and national organizations, as well as leaders in the aging arena. The Economic Development Corporation of Sarasota County made *The Institute* an integral part of its strategic plan; \$2.1 million in public and private funding helped officially launch the *Institute* in 2011.<sup>9</sup>

*The Institute for the Ages* connects older adults with organizations that need their perspectives, and supports research and development about residential options for older adults that ensure that they stay connected to the community and to all generations. *The Institute* also convenes multi-sector groups to address opportunities or problems related to the demographic transition; and produces findings, products, services, tools, or approaches for people and organizations serving older adults. In 2012, *The Institute* hosted the *Winter Forum*, an annual event that features presentations by national experts on current thinking about the possibilities of aging. The *Continuing the Conversation* (CTC) workgroups, in which *Winter Forum* attendees meet throughout the year, continue discussions relating to *Forum* topics, and now have 300 members. Participants meet regularly, examine issues and make recommendations for community change that will enhance the lives of Sarasota's older adults.

In 2011, SCOPE entered into a partnership with the Patterson Foundation and the University of South Florida Sarasota-Manatee, to engage residents in an exploration of the experience of aging in Sarasota. The partnership, named *Aging with Dignity and Independence*, used qualitative and community-based approaches to examine the views of more than 500 respondents. An analysis of the data revealed six themes that influence dignity and independence of those who are aging: meaningful involvement, respect and social inclusion, communication and information, health and well-being, aging in place, and transportation and mobility. The summary report is designed to be a catalyst, promoting the community's suggestions for change, as well as a resource for ideas and best practices from around the globe. The initiative is now reaching out to Sarasota County communities and encouraging the implementation of appropriate strategies by all sectors, to include nonprofit services, businesses, healthcare providers, neighborhoods, faith communities, and local government.

SCOPE continues to engage Sarasotans in a number of ways: partnering with neighborhoods, using community data to support change, and nurturing the progress of *Aging with Dignity and Independence*. SCOPE is likely to see many more opportunities for community action as it discovers innovative approaches to the challenges associated with an aging population. ■

Museum:  
*Arizona Science Center*

Location • Phoenix, Arizona

Serving • Older Adults

Web • [www.azscience.org](http://www.azscience.org)

The Arizona Science Center has long engaged adult volunteers age 50+ as docents, and in other conventional volunteer roles, but only recently the Center began to tap volunteers' science and technology skills to enhance its programs. Jan Stonebraker, the Science Center volunteer coordinator of four years, entered the position as the Center launched a large travelling exhibition titled *Body Worlds 3*, an exploration of biology and anatomy.

Stonebraker identified knowledgeable volunteers to help staff the exhibition. At around the same time, the Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust funded a leadership grant program, through the National Council on Aging (NCOA), to engage adult volunteers age 50+ in leadership roles. The Science Center development staff and Stonebraker designed a program that would qualify for a grant. Stonebraker found that many volunteers were retired mechanical and electrical engineers, information technology specialists, and science teachers who wanted to help the Center. It made eminent sense to use their skills to enhance educational programs.

A proposal was submitted to NCOA to create a new role for the Science Center's volunteers that would encourage the use of their experiences and skills on the Center's behalf. The Science Center was awarded \$43,000 over a two-year period, to become the seed for *Friends of Science and Technology Education (FOSTE)*. Since the grant has ended, *FOSTE* has become self-sustaining. The adult volunteers age 50+, with science backgrounds, now serve as a *FOSTE* advisory council, and are an integral part of the everyday operation and activity of the Center.

Stonebraker describes one volunteer who serves as testament to the impact of *FOSTE* volunteers on the Center and its visitors. A science teacher, this *FOSTE* volunteer created a new activity for the museum: dissecting a sheep's brain in the Science Center's theater. Described as a born teacher, the volunteer can talk to five-year-olds and Ph.D.s with equal facility; after finishing the dissection of the brain, she completed the same procedure with a sheep's heart. Stonebraker says that the teacher creates so much enthusiasm that she literally gets people jumping up and down in excitement about learning. The volunteer's work is so impressive that she was asked to present her human brain demonstration at Alan Alda's preview of the PBS documentary, *The Human Spark*.

*FOSTE* volunteers manage to accomplish a great deal with very little. Referring to several of them, Stonebraker comments that, “These folks are from the old school, where you build a crystal skull out of what’s in the dumpster.” Prior to the start of a new program, a volunteer orientation serves to identify their professional skills. Stonebraker learns the volunteers’ backgrounds and assigns them roles to comport with their experience and preferences. Volunteers always have a long and diverse list of activities to which they can be assigned, and additionally are encouraged to suggest their own ideas. To date, volunteers have created over 50 new activities.



The Arizona Science Center 50+ volunteer Niki Johnston trains student volunteers on her SCAT tabletop activity. Courtesy of the Arizona Science Center.

Lastly, the advisory council has also created a training and mentoring program for student volunteers, and today works closely with the senior managers at the Science Center. In the midst of a major construction project at the Center, the advisory council has been working with staff on devising methods to keep patrons comfortable in the midst of construction and demolition.

The Arizona Science Center is a hub for volunteer activism, demonstrating that tapping professional skills and experiences within a corps of volunteers can be an enormous asset. This creates a truly reciprocal relationship, with the Center benefitting from services at no charge, and adult volunteers age 50+ engaging in meaningful and fulfilling work. ■

**Museum:**  
*Habitot Children's Museum*

**Location** • Berkeley, California  
**Serving** • Immigrants, Low-income Children and Families  
**Web** • [www.habitot.org](http://www.habitot.org)

**H**abitot Children's Museum is billed as a hands-on discovery museum for young children and their families, but its impact reaches far beyond its interactive exhibits and educational program offerings. While Habitot has served over 950,000 people since its opening in 1998, its outreach to underserved communities and its commitment to community building and equitable childhood education is what make it stand out.

Often, youth in underserved communities do not have the same level of access to educational opportunities; Habitot partners with hundreds of social service agencies, teen parent programs, library literacy programs, homeless shelters, Head Start schools, and hospitals serving special needs children to provide greater access. Recently, the Museum has expanded services to formerly incarcerated mothers and their children, whose need for family reunification is great. Tailored family engagement sessions with these agencies' clients, in addition to free-admission days and subsidized family memberships, allow low-income and at-risk children and families to immerse themselves in a creative, educational environment in the heart of downtown Berkeley, which is centrally located and accessible by public transit.

As a result, Habitot is able to serve a very broad constituency, integrate more diverse families raising young children into the mainstream of Museum attendees, and provide equitable access to an educational environment that helps prepare young children for school and lifelong learning. Parents and caregivers at Habitot find common ground and form connections that help to break down the boundaries of race and class in the multicultural East Bay of the San Francisco Bay Area.

Several years after opening, staff noted the increasing number of immigrant women visiting Habitot who were serving as caregivers for the children of local families. Many of these women are from Mexico, Central and South America, Africa, and Tibet, and many are mothers themselves. Habitot was not only providing them with a place for quality activities for the children they cared for, but also with opportunities to connect with other caregivers from similar life circumstances. In 2007, Habitot developed a free monthly program, *Caregiver Café*, and today an average of 15 women gather each month to discuss challenges in childrearing, child development, and employer relationships, and to join in professional trainings and social networking. The Cafés provide translation, refreshments, and nearby activities for the children, so that the caregivers can participate fully.

In addition to Habitot's community engagement strategies, the Museum also provides children's classes in art, music, science, and cooking; parenting workshops; a Family Resource Center; multicultural events; an annual Early Childhood Safety Campaign; and a Toy Lending Library. The Museum has become a local hub. With constant reductions in community services and budget cuts in education, the presence of a community center with appealing exhibits and programs for children, as well as parenting support, is increasingly necessary to guarantee that current and future generations are curious, creative, and confident learners. Habitot's commitment to providing an equal-access educational environment helps level the playing field, so that all children have a chance to reach their potential. Habitot's presence as a community meeting place for new parents forges enduring ties among participating children and families from around the Bay Area. ■

**Museum:**  
*The Museum of Modern Art:  
Meet Me at MoMA*

**Location** • New York, New York  
**Serving** • Older Adults  
**Web** • [www.moma.org/meetme](http://www.moma.org/meetme)

A precedent setter for museums around the country, MoMA has a long history of serving people with disabilities, dating back to 1945, when the Museum offered art programs to help veterans acclimate to civilian life. It has been a longstanding goal to make the Museum as accessible to everyone as possible.



Participants of *Meet Me at MoMA*, a program for Alzheimer's patients, their families, and caregivers, funded by MetLife Foundation. Courtesy of Jason Brownrigg, The Museum of Modern Art.

To assure that older adults could share and connect with the Museum's collection, for many years the Museum staff has traveled to senior centers, assisted living facilities, nursing homes, and other locations. Its educators also visit immigrant communities to enable the community to partake in the benefits of an American arts institution. Francesca Rosenberg, director of Community, Access & School Programs in the Department of Education, explains that, "We want them to think of the Museum as theirs."

According to Rosenberg, these off-site programs ideally have three stages that move the audience through an educational continuum. First, educators go to the site with reproductions of works of art—which may be highlights of a current exhibition—and focus the discussion around a single theme. For the second session, the students

come to the Museum to view the originals, with the same educator providing insights into the selected art works. A third session might include a hands-on art project.

All of these programs are carefully tailored to the specific audience. Some of the 25 partners with which the Museum conducts on-site programs include the Midtown Community Court (for ex-offenders) and LaGuardia Community College—one of the most diverse schools in the city and the country.

The Museum's Alzheimer's Project grew organically out of its off-site educational programs in senior centers and other venues. Initially, the staff started working with Mount Sinai Hospital and the Alzheimer's Association to learn more about brain patterns and how to engage people with Alzheimer's. To test the effectiveness of various methods, the staff started with small pilot programs.

Through the pilots, the staff found that many activities in which family members and caregivers could participate were not suitable for those with dementia. Movies, for example, cannot be shared because Alzheimer's patients cannot follow the action. Through

the research completed via the pilots, the education staff developed *Meet Me at MoMA*, a program that engages everyone, from the Alzheimer's patient to families and caregivers, with the Museum's works of art.

The program does not patronize dementia patients by limiting attention to simpler art forms, but instead focuses on the full range of art in the museum. Participants enjoy the program for many reasons, including the ability to escape the crowds. Special tours are scheduled every Tuesday (when the museum is closed) from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m. About 100 people total (people with dementia, family members and caregivers) attend each session, and break up into six groups.

Perhaps most important, families and caregivers often witness an almost magical transformation during the program. Alzheimer's patients, who may have been very withdrawn, will begin speaking, prompted by the art and the presence of families and caregivers. Rosenberg comments that, "Often you can't tell who has the disease and who is the caregiver." The program also has fostered great connections between families.

The community educators responsible for conducting the program are planning to leave more time for interaction among participants. They will open the sculpture garden to participants to give them more of an opportunity to talk to one another. The staff walks the galleries once a month and brainstorms about ways the exhibits can be worked into *Meet Me at MoMA*. The educators are attuned to different signs of engagement, to include non-verbal communication. Those with dementia may take a long time to say something, but the educators wait and encourage them—they do not want to ask caregivers to intercede at a significant, opportune moment!

After each tour, those serving as guides give everyone, caregivers and those with dementia, an evaluation form. They also hold focus group discussions. Getting direct feedback from people with dementia has been key to improving the program. The Museum's robust Community and Access Programs are grant-funded. A two-year grant from the MetLife Foundation funded training on the Alzheimer's program for museums throughout the U.S., and included workshops, webinars, and conferences. Some museums had already created programs for those with Alzheimer's, in which case the trainings helped them to expand and fine tune them. For example, some museums had incorporated art making, and MoMA has started experimenting with adding this to their program.

With another two-year MetLife Foundation grant, MoMA is extending its influence globally. Its staff is conducting trainings with museums in Australia, Spain, Mexico, and Great Britain. A symposium at MoMA is scheduled for March 2011. The staff has found that the most effective way to link dementia patients with museums is by encouraging regional liaisons at Alzheimer's chapters and other groups to contact local museums. MoMA is now enhancing its website to include modules and lesson plans for caregivers to use outside of the museum. The staff is continually seeking feedback within the community of practice about the usefulness of the website and how well the training materials are working. ■

## Museum: *Queens Museum of Art*

**Location** • Corona, Queens, New York

**Serving** • Older Adults

**Web** • [www.queensmuseum.org](http://www.queensmuseum.org)

The Queens Museum of Art, housed in the iconic World's Fair building of 1939, is set in Queens, the nation's most diverse neighborhood, where more than 200 languages are spoken. The Museum's mission, "to present the highest quality visual arts and educational programming for people in the New York metropolitan area, and particularly for the residents of Queens, a uniquely diverse ethnic, cultural and international community," rings true to its invaluable presence in the community. Since 2005, the Museum has rededicated its programming to reflect and engage the local community, "attempting to exert the same sort of imagination, experimentation, and resources to community engagement as in the galleries," through a Museum department titled The Queens Museum of Art in the Community.

The Queens Museum works tirelessly to engage the community outside its four walls. The Museum has a full-time community organizer on staff working actively in the immediate Corona neighborhood of Queens, a position currently unmatched by any other art museum in the country. The Museum also engages in numerous ongoing partnerships with community organizations specifically in the immigrant and older adult communities. Catering to the diverse immigrant populations of Queens, the Museum hosts *Passport Fridays*, sponsored events showcasing a different country every week, from South Korea to Colombia to India.



A Corona Plaza Fair event.  
Courtesy of Queens Museum of Art.

The Museum created the *New New Yorkers* (NNY) program with the Queens Public Library, with 66 branches one of the largest urban library systems in the world. They collaborate to meet the needs of immigrant adults. The program offers classes in English as a second language, and provides myriad multilingual research tools, citizenship materials, and arts publications.

The Museum operates, as one of its community engagement features, *El Corazón de Corona* or *The Heart of Corona Initiative*, a project that "aims to address the health of residents and to activate and beautify Corona's public space." This initiative boasts several cross-sector projects created in collaboration with local health providers, businesses, and elected leaders: *Beautification and Clean-Up*, a *Healthy Taste of Corona Cookbook*, and numerous public arts projects, as well as popular street festivals, such as the recent 107th Corona Block Party, *My Street My Home*.



Volunteers from the Corazón de Corona project take a break during the clean up and beautification of public space near the Museum. Courtesy of Queens Museum of Art.

The Corona neighborhood is an historic hub of ethnic and racial diversity, home to such legends as Ella Fitzgerald, Louis Armstrong, and Malcolm X. In the last three decades, Corona has experienced major demographic shifts aligned with national trends; the neighborhood has become home to a steady increase of immigrant populations. As a premier institution located in the heart of Corona, the Queens Museum of Art engages as a primary stakeholder in the community, to serve as a vehicle for community revitalization. With high quality public engagement programs, the Museum promotes such unique initiatives as: *The Immigrants & Parks Collaborative*, immigrant-led civic engagement programs in public parks; and *The Corona Studio*, which curates new works of community public art for traditionally underserved audiences.

Beyond providing ample community engagement and recreational events, the Museum strives to meet many of the social challenges facing neighborhood residents through its umbrella art therapy program, *Art Access*, which serves community members with special needs. An award-winning program recognized by the Institute of Museum and Library Services for exemplary leadership and community partnership, *Art Access* was launched in 1983 with a mission to “promote exploration through the arts and to highlight the creativity that exists in all people.” Originally, the program was created to provide art education for the visually impaired; today, *Art Access* has widely expanded its mission and capacity to serve over 5,000 New York City school children enrolled in special education programs each year. The program is staffed primarily by therapists, trained in creative art therapies, who are able to adapt their expertise to meet community needs.

Acclaimed programming within *Art Access* includes *The Autism Initiative*, *Gallery Gatherings*, in-house programming for families hosting children in the foster care system, the *Multi-Sensory Tour Kit*, *Sign Language Tours*, and more. This extensive, diverse programming is evidence of the Queens Museum’s priority goal, to be accessible beyond the parameters often associated with traditional efforts to eliminate barriers.

The Queens Museum of Art goes above and beyond, through incredible outreach programming designed for the older adult and immigrant populations, as well as those with diverse special needs. It extends its work far beyond its four walls, to conduct programming in community venues and encourage residents to visit the Museum for learning experiences that involve them. The Museum today acts as a leader and role model for all institutions attempting to break down barriers to access and to reach out to all community residents. ■

## Nonprofit Organization: *Circle of Care*

**Location** • Boulder, Colorado

**Serving** • Older Adults

**Web** • [www.circleofcareproject.org](http://www.circleofcareproject.org)

Circle of Care founder, Joan Raderman, of Boulder, Colorado, wanted to end the isolation of vulnerable elderly in her community, and she wondered if the arts could play a role. In 2004, Raderman, an administrator at a senior facility, was deeply saddened by the current model of senior living. Many older adults were completely separated from the neighborhood and its resources and were viewed as a burden, rather than as an asset.



A volunteer and senior who are “Study Buddies” participating in the “Senior Audit Partners Program” which connects seniors with volunteers who take them to University of Colorado classes. Both get to audit the class at no cost. Courtesy of Circle of Care

“No matter what I did to make it better on the inside, no matter how many plants, guests, or good food I brought in, [the seniors] still rarely got to experience the sights, sounds, tastes and smell of the outside world, and something slowly changed in them. They shut down,” she says. Raderman decided to use arts and culture as tools for integrating older adults into the community. An intergenerational, elder life-enrichment program committed to making a positive impact on aging through the arts, Circle of Care is the first program of its kind in the country. Circle of Care serves seniors who are 65 and older living in Section 8 housing, or are homebound, as well as residents of senior facilities or in assisted living. Many have physical, cognitive, and financial challenges.

The original design model, now called *Access to the Arts for Elders*, was a volunteer transportation program. Volunteers would meet seniors at their homes or senior facilities, and both would receive free tickets to attend a high-caliber arts and cultural performance in the area. In its pilot year, Circle of Care served 400 senior residents. It has since become a permanent, city-funded initiative serving 1,200 Boulder County senior residents and engaging more than 2,500 registered volunteers annually. Circle of Care originally attracted volunteers through an attention-grabbing *Senior Idol*, a show that provides a showcase for senior talent. Once volunteers are recruited, they register for mandatory driver training, in partnership with the Denver Regional Mobility and Access Council, and are trained by Circle of Care on the best ways to accommodate and transport older adults.

Raderman scoured the community to find permanent arts and cultural partners. Circle of Care’s first partner was the Colorado Music Festival, which wanted to draw hundreds more to its music concerts. Recognizing an opportunity, and with the mantra that, “Every seat filled can change a life,” Raderman accepted

600 free tickets to the Festival in exchange for filling the seats. Raderman filled the seats in six weeks. The Colorado Shakespeare Festival then agreed to become a partner, and today the Circle of Care *Cultural Partners* network has grown to include more than 50 local arts organizations, with even more in the queue. Arts organizations realized that donating tickets benefitted them, and offered a brand-new model of audience development that promised the possibility of continued exponential growth. Today, *Access to the Arts for Elders* remains the Circle of Care’s largest program. Over \$650,000 of annual in-kind ticket donations are assigned to Boulder County senior citizens and the volunteers.

Another program, *Senior Audit Partners*, was borne from a commitment to making lifelong learning accessible to all older adults interested in an intergenerational academic experience. The University of Colorado became the first partner, and while it already offered seniors the privilege of auditing classes,

barriers prevented many older adults from participating. Volunteers soon became “study buddies,” helping older adults manage their books and class registration, and in exchange received free enrollment to audit college courses. Today, *Senior Audit Partners* continues to grow.



Circle of Care’s *Library Access Partners* is a collaboration with

the Boulder Public Library and trains Circle of Care volunteers to improve the access of older adults to library events



Top: Circle of Care volunteers, Denise, Russ and Scott help seniors off a handicap accessible bus to go to the Colorado Music Festival.

Bottom: Making connections.

Courtesy of Circle of Care.

“Thousands of older adults all over the country struggle with social isolation from the very communities to which they devoted their lives. They contributed to our society, raising their children, working, building our towns and cities, and giving their time to create what we benefit from today. Numerous losses, whether it be family, friends, health, or finances, cause older adults to slowly withdraw from



Seniors waiting for volunteer drivers to arrive on their way to a concert, in front of the senior residence Golden West. Courtesy of Circle of Care.

the world. We have a responsibility to them—our mothers, fathers, teachers and mentors, and to ourselves, to create a new culture for aging: an inclusive, caring community for all of us at every stage of our lives. Circle of Care: for them today, for you tomorrow.”

—Joan Raderman, Founder, Circle of Care

and resources. This program gives special attention to seniors with disabilities and mobility challenges. *Elder Adventurers* enables older adults with limited access or mobility to enjoy the great outdoors and partake in education about nature. Raderman asked older adults, “What would you most want if mobility barriers were removed?” Many responded that they would “want to be back in nature, to be in the sun, and to be with people.” *Elder Adventurers*, through a partnership with parks and open-space organizations, provides recreation opportunities as appealing as a picnic in the park or garden, and is highly valued by older adults in the program.

Circle of Care’s large group of volunteers, ranging in ages from six to 98 years old, span the generations. When volunteers attend performances of arts organizations with older adults, they become arts ambassadors, sharing their good experiences and the quality of programs with friends, family, and neighbors. Volunteers are known as “cultural companions,” and the volunteer and older adult duo become part of the wave of intergenerational relationships emerging across the city. Many of the baby boomer volunteers who participate give their time in exchange for free concert tickets and a chance to get to know their elders, but they also want to ensure such services are available when they are older.

Raderman states that the organization’s biggest challenges include the ability to attract sufficient resources to meet the constantly increasing demand. She notes that it is unusual for a board, not having precedents to guide it, to be required to manage innovation while overseeing development. There is a learning curve. Raderman also notes that acquiring more resources would allow for new experiments in finding ways to connect people, with minimal cost and in a sustainable way.

The Circle of Care model can be replicated in communities across the country. For successful collaborations, it is essential to identify community amenities and resources and mobilize them. Raderman explains about her experience: “Every time we attend an event with older adults en masse, it is almost like an art installation. There is a reaction from the patrons, watching and wondering why and how all of the seniors arrived. We enjoy making the unexpected happen, and the success of what we do is in our consistency and delivering what we say we will.” ■



Circle of Care ladies, before the concert, having a picnic. Courtesy of Circle of Care.

## Nonprofit Organization: *Elders in Action*

**Location** • Portland, Oregon  
**Serving** • Older Adults  
**Web** • [www.eldersinaction.org](http://www.eldersinaction.org)



Mark Noonan at Powell's Book Store placing the decal on their window as a new Elder Friendly® Business. Courtesy of Elders in Action.

In 1993, Elders in Action created its *Age Friendly® Business Certification Program* as a way to help area businesses and services better serve older consumers. The mission of Elders in Action is “to assure a vibrant community through the active involvement of older adults,” and its programs work to ensure that quality of life never depends on age.

During the organization’s 44-year history, it has refined several volunteer-driven programs, including the *Age Friendly® Business Certification Program*. The goal of the program is to “educate and help businesses to adapt their operations, products, and services to better serve the growing mature market, as being age-friendly means being customer-friendly.” As the older adult population in America is surging, Elders in Action realized the implications for businesses to adapt. The organization was recently awarded a patent that allows it to license other agencies across the country.

The *Age Friendly® Business Certification Program* uses criteria, developed in 1993, which reflect insights on the experiences of older adults that were gleaned from consumer focus groups and studies on older consumers assessed by gerontology specialists. To receive the Certification, businesses must request an evaluation from Elders in Action and pay a nominal fee. A trained team of four senior Elders in Action volunteer evaluators, also known as “secret shoppers,” are then assigned to the account and rate the “age friendliness” of the business and recommend any necessary changes. The results are compiled and averaged and a copy is reviewed with the store owner/manager. During the review, evaluators provide feedback and suggestions to assist the owner/manager in developing a more age-friendly business. If the business achieves a passing score, it is issued an *Age Friendly®* window decal, which the business can display to publicize its commitment to older adults. Additionally, businesses will be included in the online *Age Friendly® Business Directory*.

Businesses have made improvements in such elements as lighting, strategically-located seating, and font sizes on menus. They train employees to accommodate the needs and preferences of older adults. Evaluators determine the accessibility of the business, to include assessment of its physical location, the existence of barriers to entry, and the ease of access and readability of information about it.

The types of businesses include banks, grocery stores, law offices, healthcare providers, event centers, senior-care providers, and auto services. Any business can take advantage of the opportunity to benefit from the evaluation. Businesses that understand the perspective of older adults are often able to appreciably improve their customer service. Since 1993, over 1,000 businesses have been rated age-friendly in the Portland area alone. The *Age Friendly® Business Certification Program* has been replicated in 16 sites across the United States, from Boston to Kansas.

The *Age Friendly® Business Certification Program*, while helpful to older adults, also enables businesses to attract a larger and more diverse clientele, to include many who are younger consumers. What is good for a person with a walker is also beneficial to a mother pushing a baby carriage. Mothers-to-be, as do older adults, may need a resting area while shopping. The program is also meaningful for the older adults who help to educate businesses. ■



Elder Friendly evaluators with logo on building  
Courtesy of Elders in Action.

## Nonprofit Organization: *Lifetime Arts*

Location • Pelham, New York

Serving • Older Adults

Web • [www.lifetimearts.org](http://www.lifetimearts.org)

Founded in 2008, Lifetime Arts promotes arts programming designed to engage older adults. A nonprofit organization, Lifetime Arts is committed to developing innovative programs which support creative aging and lifelong learning. To that end, Lifetime Arts offers a variety of services and programs. The organization is a clearinghouse for best practices; provides technical assistance, information services, and professional development to the individuals and organizations serving older adults through the arts; and helps to develop policy to enhance the quality of arts programs for older adults throughout the country.

As a service organization, Lifetime Arts developed *Creative Aging in Our Communities: The Public Libraries Project*, a program which demonstrates the viability and value of instructional arts programs offered in public libraries as a way to build a broad base of support for creative aging programming. *The Public Libraries Project* showcases the library as a center for access and learning for older adults; an “age-neutral” public space, the library is an accessible hub for older adults who are reluctant to go to senior centers, and is swiftly becoming an ideal center for programs that interest seniors.

*The Public Libraries Project* supports collaborations between professional teaching artists and public libraries to implement free instructional arts programs specifically designed for older adults. The project also builds the capacity of public libraries to respond to the demand for meaningful programming for an aging population, and introduces libraries to its creative aging approach and resources by providing incentive grants, professional development, and ongoing technical assistance. Led by professional teaching artists, a series of hands-on workshops allows for in-depth arts education through which participants build skills, explore new materials, and learn a variety of art-making techniques.

Teaching artists create a safe and risk-free environment where experimentation is encouraged. Instructional arts programming through the project is free for all participants, and takes place in 27 public libraries in New York City and Brooklyn. Programming includes a wide range of arts disciplines: storytelling and oral history, short story and memoir-writing (digital and written), quilt-making, poetry, drawing, painting, water color, collage-

Courtesy of Maura O'Malley.





Courtesy of Maura O'Malley.

making, print-making, chorus, and much more. All of the arts programming capitalizes on the life experiences of older adults; instructors encourage older adult participants to express what they know and what they have lived through in their art.

For the arts community, *Creative Aging in Our Communities* has illuminated the need and the opportunity to expand the boundaries of arts education and community arts programming beyond the K-12 arena and after-school programs—to include older adults. *The Public Libraries Project* has also demonstrated that it is possible to introduce, expand and sustain creative aging programming across different types of library systems, a process that has implications for how libraries across the country can respond effectively to the aging of the U.S. population.

For each library system, a program of professional development introduces librarians to creative aging best practices, current research, and model programs. Through ongoing technical assistance, librarians learn how to identify and partner with local and regional artists and community-arts organizations, conduct a facility assessment, survey patrons, recruit participants, promote and market arts programs, and fund and sustain creative aging programs. As *Creative Aging in Our Communities* continues to expand to serve more library systems, Lifetime Arts understands the importance of designing the content and delivery of the technical support and professional development components to reflect the varying resources and staff capacities of different library systems.

Lifetime Arts acknowledges that, in order for any resulting implementation model to be applicable nationally, rural systems must be included. Rural libraries face unique programming challenges and often function as the sole point of access to the arts. It has become very clear that, for many library systems, the reality of staff reductions, reduced hours, and budget cuts must be considered in determining any new program responsibilities or professional development. Finally, it also is clear that creative aging programs depend on successful partnerships with community artists, and that librarians need help identifying and connecting with them.

*Creative Aging in Our Communities* envisions reliance on the welcoming, information-rich public space of the library for delivery of arts education for and with older adults. Reaching beyond the barriers of the traditional institution, Lifetime Arts helps libraries create effective collaborations between teaching artists and librarians; build the capacity of different library systems to carry out and sustain the programs; and identify new sources of funds to initiate work in new systems. Teaching artists and librarians have strengths in common that enable them to design and implement arts programs for older adults—while they are expanding the capacity of libraries, a nearly-ubiquitous community resource, to improve the quality of life for a growing segment of library patrons. ■

## Nonprofit Organization: *The Massachusetts Elder Arts Initiative*

**Location** • Boston, Massachusetts

**Serving** • Older Adults

**Web** • [www.massculturalcouncil.org](http://www.massculturalcouncil.org)

**T**he Elder Arts Initiative joined artists, government, and service providers to engage older adults in the artistic process. Participants in the Elder Arts Initiative learned interviewing skills and techniques employed in the creative process, and had the opportunity to take part in a mentorship or pilot project of their own. Though considerable funding was curtailed in 2002, the Massachusetts Cultural Council (MCC) continues to support local arts programs in the state through grants.

The Initiative began in 1996, when the Cultural Council, the Massachusetts Extended Care Federation (an association of nursing homes), the Executive Office for Elder Affairs, and the State's Council on Aging held a series of meetings about older adults and the arts. The Cultural Council then launched the Initiative in 1997.

The National Endowment for the Arts provided funding for the Initiative through its *Challenge America Program Initiative* and "Artists and Communities: America Creates for the Millennium Program." For older adults, the benefits of the Initiative included social interaction, an enhanced sense of purpose, a window for introspection, and improvement in physical health. In addition, the Initiative enabled older adults to communicate their wisdom and experience to younger generations.

Through the program, artists and service providers were trained in theoretical and hands-on techniques, to help seniors transform their memories and experiences into a variety of art forms. *Introductory Training Seminars* were held at different locations in Massachusetts. Moving from facility to facility, trainees gained experience with a variety of populations and environments. Topics covered during the *Introductory Seminars* included the following:

- Finding artistry in everyday encounters with elders;
- Demystifying the artistic process for non-artists;
- Working with youth and elders together, to create intergenerational art; and
- Encouraging staffs of senior centers to be involved and supportive.

Sixteen *Introductory Training Seminars* provided 230 artists and service providers with strategies for using creative techniques with older adults. Site visits provided hands-on training for seminar participants and resulted in arts programs engaging over 1,200 older adults, in more than 86 facilities, across Massachusetts.

Participants in the seminars had the opportunity to design a mentored project, in which an artist and service provider agreed to join as partners. With the guidance of a master artist, they designed a long-range art project using the techniques introduced in the seminar.

Additionally, through a 15-week program called *The Pilot Project*, artists and service providers defined the scope, themes, production, and execution of an artistic activity appropriate for older adults. The Mid-Atlantic Arts Foundation funded a pilot production that engaged residents of the Providence Place Independent Living Community (Holyoke, Massachusetts), and nine-year-olds from Girls Inc., in a team effort in which they created dances, songs, and poems about identity, dreams, and home.

Arts experiences offered in facilities for older adults are often passive in nature, with arts viewed as a form of entertainment rather than an opportunity for engagement. *The Massachusetts Elder Arts Initiative Mentoring Project* facilitated 20 mentored projects across the state, which incorporated creative writing, visual arts, music, and theater. Through training seminars, mentoring, and pilot projects, the program responded to the understanding that interactive arts help promote both individuality and community among older adults. ■

## Nonprofit Organization: *Stone Soup Fresno*

**Location** • Fresno, California

**Serving** • Southeast Asian Refugees

**Web** • [www.stonesoupfresno.org](http://www.stonesoupfresno.org)

**S**tone Soup's mission is to nurture leadership that creates positive change for Southeast Asian families, enabling them to move forward and find their voices and places in America. In 1992, with a handful of volunteers and a \$50 budget, what was to become Stone Soup started out as a summer recreation program.

Stone Soup's early work tackled many serious problems confronting the El Dorado Park community in Fresno, California, a two-block square that was home to about 7,000 people, many of whom were recent Southeast Asian refugees. El Dorado Park is less than one mile west of the California State University (CSU), Fresno campus. Park residents struggled to acculturate to their new way of life in America and faced a number of problems, including high unemployment and poverty, language barriers, illiteracy, gang and crime problems, and low academic performance. The Southeast Asian population includes the Hmong, Laotian, and Cambodian, most of whom came here in the 1970s after the Vietnam War.

Recognizing their plight, a group of concerned individuals from the community joined forces to address the needs of the El Dorado Park residents. They formed Stone Soup, a non-profit organization whose name was inspired by the folktale, "Stone Soup." In that story, when they all contribute an ingredient, villagers create a nutritious soup whose initial components are water and a stone. The moral of the story is clear: All benefit when they share their gifts and talents to build a better community.

The group brought the philosophy of the folktale to life, creating a collaborative of 40 organizations, agencies, and community members to address the problems identified by residents. The excellence of their work on behalf of Southeast Asian families has been recognized with several prestigious awards, including the Herman Goldstein POP Award, the Youth Citizenship Award, and the John Martin Fresno Area Reading Council Award. In 1995, President Clinton conferred one of the most prestigious honors on Stone Soup, the President's Service Award. Stone Soup's commitment to stewardship, accountability, and maximizing resources has also earned it HUD's Best Practice Award.

Stone Soup's work continues to be about relationships and partnerships that are mutually educational and supportive. El Dorado Park families provide Stone Soup with the priceless gift of trust and love and an education in the richness of their culture. Listening to families is central to Stone Soup's philosophy. All services are developed and evolve as a direct result of continuing conversations with families. Stone Soup operates as a cross-cultural hub for children, youth, and families, and as a resource center where community meetings, classes, and workshops take place. The organization's work has grown from intervention and academic enrichment programs to many holistic, high-quality services that bridge cultures. Stone Soup is focused on creating a self-sufficient Southeast Asian community that is able to actively engage in the mainstream society as new Americans.

A remarkable array of year-round services is offered to Southeast Asian families throughout Fresno, including early childhood education programs; parent engagement and family-strengthening training and workshops; youth leadership development; cultural competency training and consultation services; and cultural arts advancement and preservation programs. One of its programs, the *Hmong Cultural Academy*, serves 150 youth from kindergarten through high school during six weeks in the summer. The academy program is designed to provide cultural affirmation, enhance confidence, and foster individual strengths. For many Hmong families, the organization also offers educational programs, to include English as a Second Language and preparation for citizenship. Additionally, the organization partners with healthcare practitioners to help parents and grandparents with concerns regarding children’s safety and health. The organization staff says that, “When it comes to health, the ways of East and West can be sharply contrasted...we are finding points in common and applying principles with respect; we are removing barriers by increasing understanding and opening lines of communication, and we are helping to nurture valuable, accepting relationships among providers and patients.”

Stone Soup’s strength is that it encourages an organizational culture of competence that attracts the imagination and commitment of many high-level and talented volunteers who provide quality services. Stone Soup engages community members, faculty, and students from neighboring universities, colleges, and high schools in its work to build a more vibrant community. Faculty and students come from a variety of academic disciplines, including counseling, social work, sociology, child and family studies, gerontology, liberal studies/education, health science, nutrition, criminology, theater art/drama, and many more. In addition to volunteering, students participate at Stone Soup through dozens of different service-learning and internship opportunities.



These collaborations serve as a model for highly effective and efficient partnerships. Faculty, staff and students, through their involvement, have significantly increased their knowledge and appreciation of the El Dorado Park neighborhood and the community at large. Stone Soup has enhanced its impact due to the many resources, both human and otherwise, contributed by the many committed volunteers. First and foremost, however, the residents of El Dorado Park have seen a dramatic change in their neighborhood and their lives. ■



Top: On becoming a new American citizen, Stone Soup staff Tong Lee provides encouragement to a senior citizen in transition.

Bottom: Opening doors across cultures and generations. Hmong culture expert Bee Yang engages eager minds in understanding and preserving rich traditions.

Courtesy of Stone Soup Fresno.

## Opera: *Houston Grand Opera: HGOco*

Location • Houston, Texas

Serving • Immigrants

Web • [www.hgoco.org](http://www.hgoco.org)

The suffix of HGOco stands for “Company-Community-Collaboration.” The director of HGOco, Sandra Bernhard, confirms that the three words summarize the Opera’s mission, which is to serve as a cultural resource within the community. Since 2007, HGOco has taken the responsibility for Houston Grand Opera’s collaboration with the city’s many diverse communities, in order to enhance opera’s relevance to them. Houston is a majority-minority city, ahead of the projected curve for a majority-minority nation in 2042; Houston has the fourth largest Hispanic population and seventh largest Asian population in the country.<sup>10</sup> HGOco is recognized for working with many of Houston’s distinct communities, showcasing unique personal stories of home, food, music, culture, and more, and telling those stories through words and music. “There is no culture on the planet that does not have a musical-storytelling tradition,” says Bernhard. “We like to start with that.”



*The Refuge* featuring Houston Grand Opera soloists and chorus with members of the Mukule family, immigrants from the Republic of Congo. Courtesy of photographer Janice Rubin and the Houston Grand Opera.

Early on, HGOco staff encountered skepticism from some communities. Bernhard describes turning to the key lessons from a Grantmakers in the Arts report, *Invitation to the Dance: Audience Development for the Next Century*,<sup>11</sup> which focuses on equitable audience development for arts organizations. According to the report, in order to build strong community connections, the Opera would have to focus on listening to the community and building trust. Bernhard says that the approach requires us to “show up regularly to community meetings and events, and to continue engaging.” Through these actions, the Opera staff began to know the communities and share in their goals. Bernhard is quick to point out that, “Communities are dynamic. They are always changing and developing. Therefore, continuing to build community relationships is a task that will take a long time, and is in fact never finished.”

The Opera’s partner communities were chosen in consultation with the Office of the Mayor, which in 2007 recommended seven diverse immigrant communities that contribute to Houston’s dynamic character. The Opera still works with these communities today, but has added other Houston communities to the list of

partners as well. For example, HGOco worked with a group of first responders in Houston, who participated in the rescue and recovery efforts at Ground Zero, in New York City, following the events of 9/11. Their stories formed the basis of *Pieces of 9/11*, which premiered in 2011. It is a musical-dramatic work created by the renowned team of dramatist Gene Scheer and composer Jake Heggie.

HGOco also partners with Neighborhood Centers Inc. (NCI), a regional community and economic development organization which serves a range of community needs in over 66 locations. To reach children and families where they live, work, and go to school, the HGOco also works with the Houston Independent School District (HISD). HGOco supports a range of successful programs, in order to offer the full creative resources of a 21<sup>st</sup> century opera company to serve the City. These programs include the multilingual programs, such as *Side-by-Side Storybook Opera* and *Opera to Go*, in which artists and performers present opera to community audiences.

Offering productions based on collaborative creativity, HGOco's *Song of Houston* allows the community to tell its own story through words and music. At the start, the Opera introduces a composer and a librettist to the community. They listen to residents' personal experiences, collecting first-person accounts that come from the heart. This ensures that audiences connect to these stories when they are retold on stage and set to music developed by the composer. Community members often participate as performers in these projects.

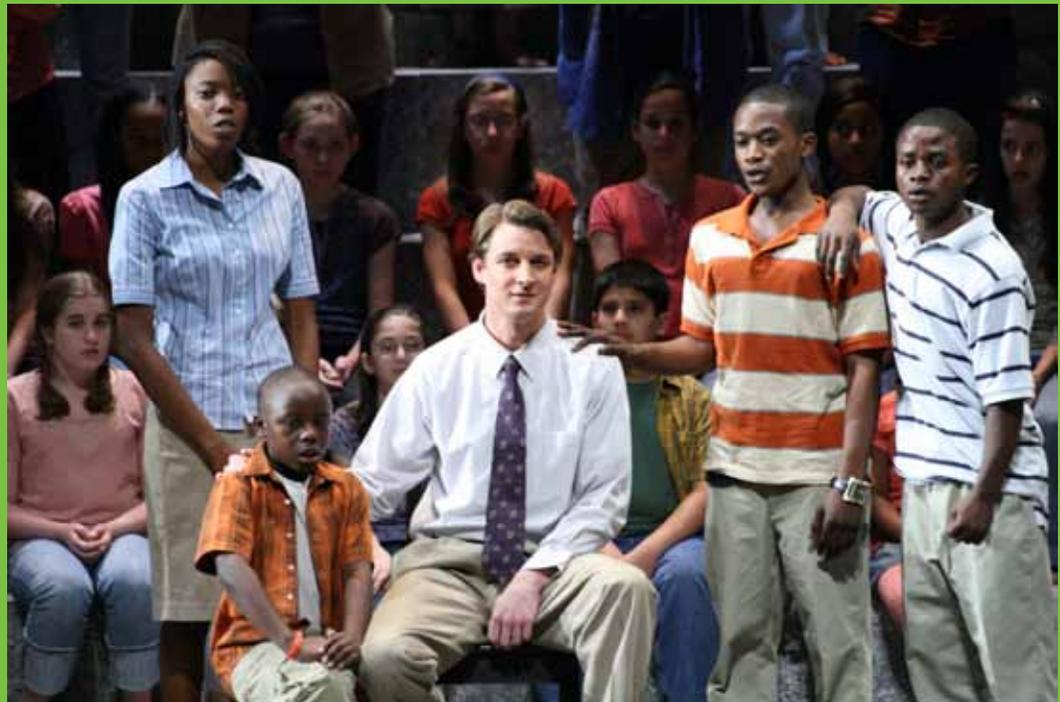
The first *Song of Houston* project was *The Refuge*, which the New York Times describes: “[Put] immigration center stage in a dramatic outreach to the more than 1,000,000 foreign-born residents... and in an elegiac finale, the singers, including five young Congolese brothers new to the opera stage, proclaim, ‘We are you. Our stories are your stories.’<sup>12</sup>” *The Refuge* was the opera that, as the Opera's managing director, Anthony Freud, recounts, “opened my eyes to a way of engaging a potential audience to whom opera has been completely irrelevant—until now.” Seven tableaux portray stories of immigration to the United States from Africa, Vietnam, Mexico, Pakistan, India, the former Soviet Union, and Central America. Composed by Houston native Christopher Theofanidis, the opera includes recordings of community members' own words from hundreds of interviews conducted by Theofanidis and librettist Leah Lax. The premiere of each tableau of *The Refuge* was performed in the community that inspired it. The tableaux were then presented as a whole in free performances at the Opera's home, the Wortham Center, and at Miller Outdoor Theatre.

Working with Project Row Houses (PRH), HGOco created *Now and Then*, which celebrates the blues experience. PRH, which is a community-development and

Top: HGOco  
Song of Houston  
Mariachi Opera  
"Cruzar la Cara de  
la Luna / To Cross  
the Face of the  
Moon." Courtesy of  
the Houston Grand  
Opera.



Bottom: Performers  
from *The Refuge*  
Courtesy of  
photographer  
Janice Rubin and  
the Houston Grand  
Opera



public-arts organization located in Houston's predominantly African American Third Ward, was one of its first community partners in *Song of Houston*. In a community steeped in the blues tradition, HGOco and PRH created a compelling stage production that represented the blues tradition 50 years into the past. Additionally, the project *East + West*, according to HGOco, is a "four year (2010-2014) celebration of Houston as a meeting place for eastern and western cultures," presented as a series of chamber operas "that explore the relationship between first and second generation immigrants, refugees, storytelling traditions, and cultural inheritance."

The Opera's newest groundbreaking program is *Home + Place*, a partnership between Neighborhood Centers Inc., and the Houston Independent School District, that involves three Houston neighborhoods building "home and place" through music, poetry, dance, visual art and film. Working with the public schools, HGOco helps neighborhood residents tell their stories through art. Students lead the entire neighborhood in defining its character through interviews. The programs promote literacy and strengthen cultural identity, and a bilingual adult-storytelling workshop encourages immigrant mothers to use poetry, song and filmmaking to tell about their journeys and to reflect on the culture they create in their own homes.

As a result of *Home + Place*, HGOco will work with two new communities in Northeast and Southeast Houston, to listen, engage, interact and collaborate. HGOco's biggest challenge, and its greatest reward, is listening to community members and helping them shape their own projects, rather than coming into a community armed with their own ideas and plans. By letting the community tell its own story, mutual trust develops, and true collaborations are formed.

Bernhard emphasizes that HGOco's mission is to enable the people who call Houston their home to tell their personal stories and how they have made the city their own—and not the story of immigration problems on a national or even local scale.

As Bernhard says, "Always remember that we're here to tell the stories."



*The Refuge.*  
Courtesy of photographer  
Janice Rubin and the  
Houston Grand Opera.

## Orchestra: *The Intergeneration Orchestra of Omaha*

**Location** • Omaha, Nebraska

**Serving** • Older Adults

**Web** • [igoomaha.homestead.com](http://igoomaha.homestead.com)

Symbolized by a rose in full bloom and a rose bud, The Intergeneration Orchestra of Omaha (IGO Omaha) joins older, experienced musicians with young musicians, using a love of music to bridge generation gaps. The Orchestra explains that, “The rose in full bloom signifies the lifetime of experience the older musicians bring to the group, while the rosebud represents the emerging talents of our younger artists.” This intergenerational program is a win-win for all involved; the young gain the opportunity to develop their skills, while older participants are able to play the music they love well past the age of retirement. Perhaps more significantly, both young and old find support and friendship as they pursue musical excellence.

With the goal of joining two distinct generations “through the universal language of music,” the IGO of Omaha was started by Chris Gillette, current project director of the Orchestra and the director of the Community Services Division of the Eastern Nebraska Office on Aging (ENOA), and former co-worker Cora Lee Bell. The Orchestra was initially funded by a grant from the Peter Kiewit Foundation, but has since been supported by numerous other grants, donations, memberships, fundraisers, and performance fees, and a sponsorship from ENOA. The Orchestra is run by an elected board of directors, which includes two younger and two older musicians.

The Intergeneration Orchestra of Omaha has an average of 60 musicians ranging in age from 12 to 82 years. Musicians may audition if they are age 25 years or younger or 50 years and older, with no minimum or maximum age restrictions. The Orchestra attracts top talent, including its conductor, Chuck Penington, now in his 26<sup>th</sup> year conducting the Orchestra. He has performed with such musical legends as Tom Jones, Henry Mancini, Wayne Newton, and Engelbert Humperdinck and conducted orchestras for such major stars as George Burns, Bob Hope, and Bob Newhart. Performances encompass a variety of composition types, including movie and television themes, popular hits from different eras, and even some of Penington’s original work.

The Orchestra's season runs from September through April, with ten to 15 concerts each year, in a wide range of venues including retirement homes, schools, and private events. Although most performances are in the greater Omaha region, IGO Omaha has toured nationally ten times, performing in Washington, D.C., Pittsburgh, Mount Rushmore, Kansas City, Dallas, and Colorado's Estes Park. The Intergeneration Orchestra of Omaha is an example of a great approach to bridging generation gaps. Young musicians have the chance to learn from seasoned performing artists, while inspiring the creativity of older adults. Through IGO Omaha, the community expands the positive impact of its older residents. The Orchestra's capacity is not huge, but it continues to influence its older adult audiences, who see their peers pursuing an activity they love and taking pleasure in performing with young people. They are thus encouraged to make the most of their older years and find ways to give back to their communities. ■



The Intergenerational Orchestra of Omaha performs a concert. Courtesy of The Intergenerational Orchestra.

## Parks and Recreation: *The San José Department of Parks, Recreation, & Neighborhood Services*

**Location** • San José, California

**Serving** • Immigrants

**Web** • [www.sanjoseca.gov](http://www.sanjoseca.gov)

The nationally recognized Mayor's Gang Prevention Task Force (MGPTF) of San José, California, is housed in The San José Department of Parks, Recreation, & Neighborhood Services. This is an uncommon assignment, as most efforts to end gang violence are usually spearheaded by police departments. The Task Force leads a full continuum of services to thwart gang violence, from prevention, intervention, and suppression, to re-entry. During the mid-1980s, the incidence of gang warfare in several neighborhoods of San José, a city of nearly 1,000,000,<sup>13</sup> began escalating, with significant increases in drug use, gang violence, and other criminal activity.

The gang dynamic in San José exists predominantly between the Norteños (Northerners) and the Sureños (Southerners); gang warfare between the two can be described as rooted in the gang members' immigration patterns and their entry into the United States. Norteños, mostly from families originally from Mexico, have since been Americanized and often no longer speak their native language, while Sureños are typically first-generation immigrants who often join the gang for safety reasons, or by default. The majority of the gang members in San José are the Norteños, who claim to be different from their newcomer brethren.

In 1991, former San José Mayor Susan Hammer created MGPTF, the first in the city's history, and placed millions of dollars on the table. From 1991 to 1997, MGPTF began *Project Crackdown*, which placed teams into neighborhoods to organize gang intervention and prevention efforts as well as community empowerment efforts. In 1997, the Department of Parks, Recreation, & Neighborhood Services began providing eight to 10 high-crime areas with capital funds for neighborhood revitalization, which supported structural improvements (such as street lighting and repair of broken windows). These projects blossomed into the *Strong Neighborhoods Initiative*, a \$120 million program for economic redevelopment and investment in selected neighborhoods.

Four mayors, six police chiefs, and 19 years later, the Task Force is a thriving force in San José. The Department of Parks, Recreation, & Neighborhood Services employs a holistic model in order to fulfill its mission to foster community development and improve the quality of life of children and their families. The Task Force is divided into two parts, the Policy Team and a Technical Team. The Policy Team develops strategic direction, while the Technical Team implements the Task Force's anti-gang programs. Diverse stakeholders participate in the community's efforts to end gang-related violence.

*Bringing Everyone's Strength Together (BEST)* is the Task Force's tool for assuring that allocation of funds is strategically appropriate. Through *BEST*, the Task Force distributes millions of dollars in grants to the critical community, school, and public safety programs that help curb gang violence. Funding is guided by the MGPTF Strategic Work Plan. The director of MGPTF, Mario Maciel, has been with the program since 1996, and asserts that a strong violence-intervention program requires a full continuum of services.

Maciel states that the “beauty of housing the Mayor's Gang Prevention Task Force in the Department of Parks, Recreation, & Neighborhood Services” is the ability to provide a healthy marriage of diverse but necessary programs to combat gang violence, especially when compared to efforts to prevent such violence in most other cities—that are typically based in the police force. The Task Force funds more than 25 community programs, and partners with the district attorney's office, the San José Police Department, the Probation Department, community and faith leaders, 52 community centers, mental health organizations, homework centers, gyms, and after-school programs, all of which play a role in keeping children and youth out of gangs. MGPTF focuses on community engagement and empowerment efforts, which enable residents to have the knowledge and capacity to navigate city hall, and to hold other city departments accountable. Additionally, the Task Force offers direct services, such as neighborhood watch programs, direct intervention, parenting skills programs, and more.

When compared to many cities whose mode of gang violence is suppression, Maciel turns to the intervention work needed with children and youth. A life-skills curriculum for children and youth includes sessions on how to be gang-free and future options for job placements or vocational schools. The Task Force's *Safe School Campus Initiative* combines an internal team comprising employees of the Department of Parks, Recreation, & Neighborhood Services, whose members serve as community coordinators, with a team of gang interventionists, and San José police officers. Each team is assigned to work with 15 middle and high schools (of 80 campuses in the city), to assist in prevention and intervention, and to issue warnings when violence may be brewing on and off school campuses.

Today the city of San José is one of six cities chosen for President Obama's National Forum of Youth Violence Prevention. Teams from each city have met with federal agencies and each other to share information and experience about what works in preventing youth and gang violence. At that time, each city pledged to develop or enhance comprehensive plans to prevent youth and gang violence, using multi-disciplinary partnerships, balanced approaches and data-driven strategies.<sup>14</sup> The Mayor's Gang Prevention Task Force of San José follows its mantra that “it takes a village [to combat gang violence],” and through its unique placement in the Department of Parks, Recreation, & Neighborhood Services, it has created a successful and holistic approach to intervene, prevent, and suppress gang violence. ■

Performing Arts Center:  
*Patel Conservatory at the Straz*  
*Performing Arts Center*

**Location** • Tampa, Florida

**Serving** • Immigrants

**Web** • [www.strazcenter.org](http://www.strazcenter.org)

**T**he 45,000 square foot Patel Conservatory, the educational arm of the Straz Center for the Performing Arts, offers more than 100 performing arts classes. The Conservatory describes the arts that are included as “dance, theater, and music for students of all ages and experience levels. Our instructors are passionate, working artists with extensive experience in their specific disciplines.”

The Conservatory’s artists do not confine their work to their facility—instead they share their artistry by taking their show on the road. They teach dances to migrant students and perform operas for older adults. The Conservatory’s dancers also assist Parkinson’s disease patients by demonstrating movements that can ease their rigidity, a debilitating symptom of the disease.

RCMA Academy, located in Wimauma in southeastern Hillsborough County, is a charter school directed by the Redlands Christian Migrant Association. Students from the Academy relish the two hours each week when a resident artist from the Patel Conservatory travels to the Academy to lead the students in song and dance. The artist immerses the students in the music and dances of their Latino culture. The focus varies, from ballet to jazz, salsa, meringue, and hip-hop. Tina James, the Center’s coordinator of education programs, says, “The kids love it.” Established as a school for children of migrants, RCMA Academy’s students are pre-kindergarten through fifth grade. The purpose of the Academy is to educate children of migrants in a supportive environment that encourages a resilient bond with their families and their heritage.

For RCMA Academy students and Patel Conservatory educators, however, the two hours together connect both to a wider world. The joys of music and dance can be widely shared across cultural, language, and geographic boundaries and enrich everyone who participates—and in this case, for both students and the Patel Conservatory artists, these differences temporarily collapse. Patel Conservatory artists also share their talents through partnerships with an assisted living facility and with the Hillsborough County Department of Aging Services. Members of Opera Tampa, the resident Opera Company at the Straz Center, meet older adults

where they congregate in assisted living facilities or senior centers. Though the Conservatory originally varied its programs, its staff found that older adults in the county love opera—so it is not surprising that Opera Tampa now performs mini-concerts on location.

A very creative Conservatory dance teacher has devised ways to use the movements and exercises of dancers to improve the function of patients of the University of South Florida's Parkinson's Disease and Movement Disorder Center. With accompanying music from the 1950s and 1960s, Conservatory dance teachers demonstrate breathing techniques, voice warm-ups, exercise, and the basic movements and touch that can enhance the ability of the Center's patients to move with greater ease. ■

*“For many people, a visit to the Straz Center is impossible. We meet this challenge by ‘taking the show on the road!’ Through our Educational Outreach programs, we provide unique opportunities by opening our doors and sending faculty, staff and visiting performing artists to reach individuals and organizations in the community and teach them how to dream, reach, discover, and create.”*

—Patel Conservatory Educational Outreach staff member

## Public Park: *Hua Mei Bird Garden*

**Location** • New York, New York

**Serving** • Immigrants

**Web** • [www.pps.org](http://www.pps.org)

In July 2007, Ishai Goldstein reported in the *New York Times* that, “On a recent Sunday morning, more than 20 elderly Chinese men gathered in Chinatown to listen to four newborn birds sing.<sup>15</sup>” The site of this remarkable event was the Hua Mei Bird Garden, which lies at the northern tip of New York City’s Sara Delano Roosevelt Park, and is one of the City’s hidden treasures and a taste of home for the Chinese immigrants in the surrounding neighborhood. Every day, 20 or more Chinese men, most over the age of 50, bring song birds in bamboo cages to the small garden to encourage their birds to sing and improve their songs. Although the birds are a variety of species, the most prized is the Hua Mei, for which the Garden was named. The elegant bird is Chinese and known for its melodious voice and complex song.

Hua Mei gardens are common throughout China, but few exist outside of Asia. A neighborhood resident near the Garden, Gordon Douglas, says that, “These are not New York City birds. They’re not pigeons. You know, you don’t hear birds a lot in the city. They’re very exotic and wonderful.<sup>16</sup>” But without interaction with other Hua Mei, the birds’ songs lack their renowned complexity, and the birds often become depressed. The New York City Garden began informally when three older Chinese men began bringing their Hua Mei to what, at the time, was an unused patch of concrete that was more associated with drug dealers than with the delicate song birds and the loving owners who now grace the Garden.

Filling an unspoken need, the Garden quickly began attracting more song bird enthusiasts. Bird owners were not only able to better care for their beloved birds, but also developed new social networks and an opportunity to share their culture with younger members of their community and the city as a whole, while maintaining a connection to the traditions of their homeland.<sup>17</sup>

In 1995, the Garden community petitioned the city for the rights to the land and the freedom to renovate it. Given the transformation that had already begun to take place, the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation was happy to let the community take over the care and maintenance of the land. The men set up posts on which to hang the cages, and planted Japanese Maple and River Birch trees, as well as fruiting bushes that provide special treats for the song birds. Their efforts brought new life to what was once a misused, littered public space. In the intervening years, the Garden has grown in importance, becoming a fixture of the neighborhood and drawing visitors from across the city.

The Hua Mei Bird Garden is an excellent illustration of the need for city planners, parks departments, and other municipal authorities to reach out to immigrant communities and find ways to better meet their needs. It is doubtful that the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation knew anything about bird gardens prior to 1993, and if community members had not taken steps to create one themselves, the Hua Mei Bird Garden would likely still be the desolate patch of concrete it was 20 years ago. Agencies and organizations that reach out to immigrant communities might find that bird gardens, vegetable gardens, and other creative uses transform otherwise vacant and underutilized land, and they also might discover a volunteer workforce that is happy to maintain the land. ■



Courtesy of [newyorkdailyphoto.com](http://newyorkdailyphoto.com).

Service Provider:  
*The Artists Collective*

**Location** • Hartford, Connecticut

**Serving** • African American, Caribbean, and Latino Youth

**Web** • [www.artistscollective.org](http://www.artistscollective.org)

**T**he Artists Collective was established by the renowned alto saxophonist, educator, and community activist, Jackie McLean, and his wife, Dollie McLean. Working with artists Cheryl Smith, Ionis Martin, and Paul Brown, the Collective was established to advance the social and economic conditions of the city's youth. To immerse young people in their heritage, the Collective emphasizes the arts of the African Diaspora, both to reclaim the arts' magnificence and imbue youth with reverence for them—and to encourage their participation in such art forms as gospel, jazz, African dances, and other dance forms. Recognizing the benefits of joining educational and youth development programs with the arts, the Collective builds on each participant's personal exploration of identity and artistic expression.

Since its inception in 1975, The Artists Collective has operated the six-week *Summer Youth Employment and Learning Program* and has trained thousands of youth in dance, drama, African percussion, music, martial arts, and visual arts—while providing minimum wage compensation for each participant. The program's training in the arts is complemented by its *World of Work* curriculum that instructs participants in job preparation, personal and physical well-being, and academic skills. Of the 100 youth ages 14 to 18 enrolled, 95% are African American, and most come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

Funding and salaries are provided by Capital Workforce Partners, which receives funding from federal, state, city, and foundation sources. The *Summer Youth Employment and Learning Program* sets high standards for acceptable behavior, including personal care and appropriate communication. Teachers are sensitive to violent or abusive behavior and help students find individual paths to achieving their goals. The curriculum is designed to meet the needs of all in the program, and guide them in developing positive attitudes about their own futures as well as that of their communities.

Training in the arts based on traditional cultural values and involvement of mentors as role models—ranging from community leaders to successful and famous musicians—offer youth the opportunity to develop critical thinking skills, self-awareness, and self-esteem. The Artists Collective believes that the motivation to succeed stems from the understanding by at-risk youth that life can be better, and that high self-esteem, positive adult role models, and pride in cultural identity are all attainable. Preventing anger and violence and learning to trust and love one's self and other people are emphasized throughout the program.

The Artists Collective trains students to be fiscally responsible. To facilitate student attendance and reduce barriers to participation, staff meets with the students, individually and in groups, on a weekly basis, as needed. Students are expected to be present and on-time daily for the six-week program. The summer program concludes with final performances that explore a current issue relevant to the experiences of the youth. Previous performances have focused on cultural identity, youth crime and drug abuse, self-esteem and pride, sexuality, pregnancy and parental responsibilities.

Youth are encouraged to return in September to participate in the Collective's year-round *Rites of Passage Program*, and other ongoing programs. The multitude of artistic programs offered by the Artist Collective is essential to offering a safe haven for the youth of Hartford and beyond. The great emphasis on self-expression allows youth to explore broader avenues to success, while teaching them to maintain strong ties to their families and communities. ■

## Service Provider: *CJE SeniorLife*

**Location** • Chicago, Illinois

**Serving** • Older Adults

**Web** • [www.cje.net](http://www.cje.net)

**C**ulture Bus is at once a transportation service to arts and cultural events for older adults, and a unique treatment program for early-stage dementia patients. One of many adult day programs offered by CJE SeniorLife, in Chicago, Illinois, Culture Bus provides opportunities for socialization, creative expression, and intellectual stimulation designed to improve the quality of life and slow the effects of degenerative conditions such as Alzheimer's disease for many older adults.

The Culture Bus emerged, in 2002, from an Alzheimer's support group sponsored by Northwestern University's Cognitive Neurology and Alzheimer's Disease Center. Its participants were seeking more time together and opportunities for intellectual and social engagement. One member of the group suggested using a bus to enable everyone to go downtown together. The Northwestern staff immediately saw the value in this idea, and reached out to CJE, a local leader in adult-day programming, to discuss a partnership.

The two organizations developed a program for early-stage Alzheimer's patients combining cultural activities, artistic expression, and social interaction to help slow the progress of the disease, while building confidence and providing meaningful experiences. The Culture Bus program is now solely run by CJE, which provides the transportation, and has been successful in growing Culture Bus and in benefitting participants by improving their self-esteem, as well as their interactions with their caregivers.

Culture Bus participants visit a working farm. Courtesy of Culture Bus.



Participants are 60 years of age and older, and come from all ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds. The program is dedicated to acknowledging the individuality, independence, and dignity of each participant. The Culture Bus program meets once a week throughout the year. Half of the sessions are trips to cultural attractions around the greater Chicagoland area. The other half takes place in indoor settings, where participants enjoy hands-on activities in creative arts. The music, drama, dance/movement, and art connect participants to one another and to their own creativity. Each session is planned and led by a trained CJE staff member, who is supported by volunteers.

Depending on the activity, programs run from four to six hours. The program fee is \$75.00 per week, which covers all expenses, including entry fees, transportation from a predetermined meeting point, materials, and lunch. Past trips have included a visit to a glass blower's studio, trips to an African American heritage museum, sessions of Zumba and ballroom dancing in studios, and classes at a yoga/meditation center. When the group is not on tours, activities focus on creativity and self-expression, and have

included sculpting, poetry-writing, painting, drumming circles, and improvisational drama. Programming also includes exhibit tours guided by docents, a healthy and nutritious lunch, personal life-event celebrations, and opportunities for socialization throughout the day.

In conjunction with the Culture Bus program, participants and their caregivers may join an early-stage support group facilitated by a Northwestern University social worker or a caregiver support group facilitated by a CJE SeniorLife social worker. Culture Bus provides a valuable service to caregivers, who are given the opportunity to take care of their own needs or take time away from a loved one who needs constant care. Caregivers also engage with others during a Culture Bus session, and participate in hands-on, expressive activities at the culmination of each ten-week series.

Three years ago, CJE replicated the Culture Bus to serve the Chicago northwest-suburban area and conducts trips every other week throughout the year. CJE was also asked to replicate the program for seniors in Tucson, Arizona, where that program, called Adventure Bus, is now in its second successful year. Culture Bus was selected as one of three recipients of the first annual Rosalinde Gilbert Innovations in Alzheimer’s Disease Caregiving Legacy Award, given by the Family Caregiver Alliance (FCA) and The Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Foundation. The award was presented in recognition of an extraordinary program that addresses the needs of Alzheimer’s caregivers.

The Culture Bus program fills a critical gap in programming for those with early stages of memory loss. Often underserved by area services, those with memory loss have few opportunities for support until their conditions become severe. At the early stages of dementia, they are still very much aware and want to continue to live a normal and fulfilling life for as long as possible. The program’s focus on arts and self-expression is particularly relevant to the challenges faced by dementia patients, as expressive art is based on experience and can be enjoyed in spite of the language, memory, and cognitive limitations characteristic of these diseases. ■



Top: Participants become glass artists.

Bottom: Participants in a lively conversation onboard the CJE SeniorLife trip bus.

Courtesy of Culture Bus.

## Service Provider: *Upwardly Global*

**Location** • Nationwide  
**Serving** • Immigrants  
**Web** • [www.upwardlyglobal.org](http://www.upwardlyglobal.org)

The story of Upwardly Global (UpGlo) began in 1999, when founder Jane Leu visited a poultry factory touted as a model among refugee-resettlement programs. When the plant manager introduced his best employees, an Iraqi engineer and a Bosnian surgeon, Leu became immediately concerned with the shameful waste of talent. Within the year, Leu consulted with refugees and immigrants to understand and overcome the obstacles to their pursuit of skilled jobs. The program has expanded, with the support of generous funders and the participation of large employers such as Google and Microsoft, and now provides direct services through offices in Chicago, New York, and San Francisco. UpGlo also provides online training for those outside its office locations.

Immigrant communities across the country have large populations of white collar professionals who are unable to find positions in their fields of expertise in the United States, due to language and cultural barriers. Many immigrants now work in blue color jobs, and though they came to America for brighter opportunities, their skills and talents are wasted. UpGlo estimates that there are 1.5 million skilled immigrants in the United States who are unemployed or underemployed. This state of affairs is not only a problem for the underemployed immigrants, but also for employers who are missing out on a large, talented pool of workers. Upwardly Global works with skilled foreign-born workers to help them identify positions that make use of their training, while helping employers find highly qualified personnel.

UpGlo's *Employer Network* encourages integration of foreign-born, skilled workers into the United States job market through employee engagement and job-seeker training, employer education, and recruitment and placement services. The employee engagement program recruits employed professionals to participate in UpGlo workshops. These workshops enable immigrants, refugees, and individuals

UpGlo volunteer mentors receive training so they can support underemployed immigrants. Courtesy of Upwardly Global.

granted asylum to interact with workers born in the United States, who can explain U.S. hiring practices. In addition to addressing the needs of immigrants, the employee engagement program prepares volunteers to participate in cross-cultural interaction, a valuable asset in an increasingly



*“Upwardly Global taught me how to improve my skills as a job seeker and helped me to see my weaknesses as strengths. Their guidance, help, and motivation are priceless.”*

—Celinda Mendoza, Systems Integration Consultant with Accenture and UpGlo Alumna

globalized economic system. UpGlo partners with immigrant- and employment-focused organizations that provide opportunities for outreach, donate space for workshops, and offer other services that make UpGlo’s work with immigrants possible.

The employer education program trains employers to reach out to foreign-born workers, to enable them to consider their qualifications for employment. UpGlo’s recruitment and placement services go beyond counseling and include introductions of job seekers to prospective employers. UpGlo works with many companies, including Microsoft, JP Morgan Chase, PricewaterhouseCoopers, Google, Apple Computers, and the United Nations. The organization also has a research arm whose goal is to increase awareness of the skilled immigrant workforce, and demonstrate that better use of this resource can make companies more successful, and the country as a whole more competitive. UpGlo also assists foreign-born dentists, physicians, and engineers, and other professionals in obtaining proper licensing in their fields of expertise.

Since its launch in 1999, Upwardly Global has worked with more than 3,000 foreign-born job seekers. In 2010, the organization placed 240 applicants in more than 200 companies. Each worker, on average, earned \$35,000 in additional yearly income. Of those employed in 2010, 85 percent support three or more dependents. These successes, in addition to UpGlo’s research, have raised awareness of the underemployment of skilled foreign-born workers in the United States and their potential value to employers, extending UpGlo’s influence.

UpGlo’s work is made possible by funding from charitable foundations, including



the Kellogg Foundation, the Tiger Foundation, and the Carson Family Trust, in addition to corporate, individual, and government support. Given the program’s success and commitment to improving the lives of immigrants while enhancing American competitiveness, it is clear that the organization will continue to make hiring practices in this country more inclusive. ■

Through one-on-one mentoring sessions UpGlo helps unemployed skilled immigrants overcome cultural barriers and find jobs in the United States. Courtesy of Upwardly Global.

## Theater: *ASU Gammage*

**Location** • Phoenix, Arizona

**Serving** • Older Adults

**Web** • [www.asugammage.com](http://www.asugammage.com)

**H**oused in a stunning building designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, ASU Gammage at Arizona State University, one of the largest university-based theaters in the world, has been broadening its audience for many years. Its outreach extends to both immigrant and older adult audiences. Widely recognized for its work in Phoenix, ASU Gammage's commitment becomes evident in the role played by one of its staff members: Michael Reed, the senior director of Cultural Participation and Programming, is responsible for developing and overseeing an astonishing array of performances, including explorations of theater arts for all ages, and programs highlighting the arts of various cultures.

The commitment to accommodating older adults, for example, was demonstrated while *The Phantom of the Opera* was at the theater for a four-week run. To better suit the preferences of older adult audiences, some performances were scheduled as matinees. Reed also explains that the house staff is very experienced in working with older adults and those who are frail or have disabilities. The staff works with ARTability, an Arizona organization that promotes accessibility to the arts for those with disabilities. Before each season begins, the staff reviews issues related to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), though Frank Lloyd Wright's design, while handsome, has made retrofitting ASU Gammage to meet the requirements of the ADA, and other evolving audience needs, quite difficult.

ASU Gammage's desire to prioritize outreach that promotes cultural diversity is reflected in its programming for school children in Phoenix. Reed explains that, "The Phoenix Elementary School District has up to 90 percent of Latino students

ASU Gammage senior volunteers attending a cultural participation event in their honor. Courtesy of ASU Gammage.



*“The Cultural Participation programs are the heart of ASU Gammage’s mission of ‘connecting communities.’ The programs take the artist’s voice, community identities and the innovation of ASU to create a shared cultural place; uniquely inspiring and bringing thousands of Arizonans together for extraordinary shared experiences that create community and foster learning.”*

—ASU Gammage staff member

in many of its schools,” and he seeks to give them the chance to benefit from exposure to diverse arts and culture. Through a “busing” scholarship funded by the Nationwide Foundation, students and teachers, for \$3.00 each, are transported to ASU Gammage for one-hour performances throughout the school year. To support teachers, the *Cultural Participation Program* provides a complementary guide filled with interactive lesson plans.

In 2010, performances included *Dancing Earth*, recommended for grades six to 12, in which an indigenous contemporary ensemble presented a symbolic dance program. The program, according to ASU Gammage’s description, imparted “stories of creation, bio-diversity, history, and sustainability, to bring to young audiences a revitalized understanding of humans in relationship with the planet.”

Another was *Step Afrika!*, suggested for grades three through 12, that featured a touring company whose “stepping” reflects African traditions in dance. According to the description of the performance, the artists demonstrated the “ties between stepping, college life, and academic achievement, while introducing the concepts of team work, discipline, and commitment. The performers incorporated world traditions, demonstrated through the lively South African gumboot dance.”

Reed says that, “We’re flexible and we try to really understand what’s happening in our community. And we try to make our programs reflective of what’s needed.” He notes that strong leadership explains Gammage’s success: Colleen Jennings-Roggensack, the executive director, is very community-oriented and the senior staff has been working together for some time. Connecting communities is their mission. Jennings-Roggensack is a prominent local personality, and is frequently on morning talk shows. Reed is also interviewed on television and radio. This contact with the public gives both the chance to share their vision for the theater with the community.

Reed adds that ASU Gammage has made inroads in attracting individual donors; cultural participation is a strong draw for Gammage donors and funders. The number of individuals restricting donations to cultural participation programs has increased, and funding is also available from the Arizona Lottery for these programs. Reed explains that, “When donors find out they do this broader programming, they are impressed.” ■

## Theater: *Cornerstone Theater Company*

**Location** • Los Angeles, California

**Serving** • Immigrants

**Web** • [www.cornerstonetheater.org](http://www.cornerstonetheater.org)

**C**ornerstone Theater has a two-fold purpose: to create multi-ethnic, community-based theater that promotes mutual understanding while building bridges in diverse communities. A participant in Cornerstone Theater, confirming its relevance to the community, reported that, “Cornerstone is important because it is a life-changing process. It’s more than just a theater company. It gives voice to the voiceless<sup>18</sup>.”

Cornerstone was founded in 1986 by playwright Allison Carey and the director, Bill Rauch, to bring theater to rural communities that may not have had the opportunity to experience it. To Carey and Rauch, making theater accessible to America’s small towns was not just a matter of performance, but also of adaptation. The works of Shakespeare, Moliere, Aeschylus, and other great playwrights provide profound commentary on the human experience, but Cornerstone wanted to make these works more culturally relevant and readily understandable. The Theater did not want to perform *for* the communities, but *with* them, and recruited locals to help adapt, produce, and perform the plays. Early in Cornerstone’s existence, this approach made theater available to communities that were otherwise deprived of it, while giving participants a voice and a forum for addressing issues important to them. Realizing the power of theater, Cornerstone’s aspirations quickly evolved into building community through the production and performance of theater.

In 1992, Cornerstone established a permanent base in Los Angeles, with its urban environment and proximity to diverse neighborhoods. In its new home, Cornerstone quickly became an asset to surrounding communities, though its sense of community includes not only neighborhoods and physical places, but also communities based on faith, age, culture, and language. These new relationships led to innovative approaches, including “rapid response theater,” which can give voice to participants faced with pressing issues. In 2006, the Theater produced an adaptation of *Grapes of Wrath* in response to plans to demolish a local community garden. As part of its mission to build new bridges, many productions have “pay what you want” admissions policies.

Performances are varied, and each is tailored to the community where it is presented. Although they are often versions of masterpieces, in recent years the Theater has increased the number of productions that illuminate community issues. Its numerous adaptations vary widely, to include plays by Shakespeare and Chekov and stories from the Bible. In 2002, for example, Cornerstone produced

*Crossings*, which modified New and Old Testament stories to recount the journeys of immigrants in five ethnically diverse Catholic parishes in the Los Angeles area. A more recent production, a collaboration with Theater of War Productions, featured readings from ancient Greek plays about wars, such as Sophocles' *Ajax* and *Philoctetes*. They were followed by a town hall meeting with local military leaders and veterans, who discussed the impact of war on the community and the soldiers acclimating to peacetime life.

Cornerstone Theater seeks the involvement of community residents in developing and presenting original works, which allow communities to tell their own stories. *Waking up in Lost Hills*, a loose adaptation of *Rip Van Winkle* written by Jose Cruz Gonzalez, was crafted from interviews and story circles with residents of Lost Hills, most of whom are Latino farm workers and their families. For the production of the play, some Lost Hill residents were performers and others worked backstage<sup>19</sup>.

Cornerstone is happy to share its innovative approach to community building through theater, and collaborates with such theatrical leaders as the Guthrie Theater, the Mark Taper Forum, Arena Stage, and the Great Lakes Theatrical Festival. The Cornerstone Institute offers summer residencies and two-day, intensive courses to help community leaders and individuals with theater backgrounds to introduce theater into their own communities and address their challenges. ■

University:  
*Oak Hammock at the University  
of Florida, Inc.*

Location • Gainesville, Florida  
Serving • Older Adults  
Web • [www.oakhammock.org](http://www.oakhammock.org)

As the baby boomers reach retirement age, institutions across the United States will have to find creative solutions to accommodate their burgeoning numbers. Despite this growing need, a retirement community on a college campus might not seem to be a great idea. It's not difficult to imagine late-night police calls from seniors who think midnight is entirely too late to be playing loud music, or are appalled by the undergraduates who trample the beloved garden of a 90-year old during their late night escapades. But Oak Hammock at the University of Florida, Inc. has created just such an unlikely pairing, a relationship in which university administration, students, senior residents, and other stakeholders have found a lot to like.

Although the idea to establish a retirement community had been floating around the University of Florida's campus for years, Dr. Gordon Streib, a sociology professor at the University, spearheaded the effort after researching the emotional and health benefits older residents would enjoy if university resources were made available to them. In 1997, Dr. Streib and the director of the University's Institute for Gerontology, Dr. Ray Coward, met with the University's president and other leaders to propose a University-sponsored retirement community. The meeting resulted in the formation of a committee to investigate the possibilities, and eventually led to the creation of Oak Hammock at the University of Florida as a nonprofit corporation.

With the support of a development team led by PRAXIS, LLC and FORCE Financial, LLC, the facility opened its doors in the spring of 2004. Since then, Oak Hammock has been extremely successful, and now has a long waiting list. Unlike many other town-gown partnerships, the Gainesville, Florida, community has witnessed a thriving reciprocal relationship between the aging community and the University. The University and Oak Hammock have created an environment that is appealing to both young and old alike.

The partnership between the University of Florida and Oak Hammock allows residents to participate in lifelong learning and take advantage of the rich arts and cultural environment that the University has to offer, while the University enjoys a number of educational and financial benefits from its association with a much older demographic than is the norm. Living on the University campus gives senior residents access to sporting events, the performing arts, and libraries, among other amenities. They can also take classes on site at Oak Hammock, venture to the campus to listen to a lecture or class, or teach and mentor students themselves.

In addition, the retirement facility serves as a convenient hands-on classroom for students. The College of Health and Human Performance, for example, helps run and maintain Oak Hammock's state-of-the-art fitness center, and the College of Dentistry staffs an on-site dentist office. The College of Medicine and College of Pharmacy provide consultations and lectures on health. Important to many residents, the University College of Veterinary Medicine can treat the Oak Hammock community's pets. The University of Florida also has the opportunity to develop the loyalty of these older residents, many of whom have considerable discretionary income or are beginning to think about their legacy.

Oak Hammock is located just off the University of Florida campus, so it is sheltered from the hustle and bustle of the University, but is still close enough to take advantage of the resources it makes available. The facility's 136-acre lot includes woodlands, bike and walking paths, and gardens, in a resort-like setting and is designed to help seniors make the most of their later years. A variety of living situations is available, including apartments and free-standing homes, all with designs that accommodate the mobility needs of older adults.

Oak Hammock serves as an important model for universities across the country, as they begin to rethink their relationship with their communities. Oak Hammock at the University of Florida has demonstrated that unusual partnerships and innovative thinking can fundamentally change the role institutions play. The connection to the University enlivens the social and cultural environment for its residents, while the presence of older adults contributes to the college experience of students. ■

University:  
*Osher Lifelong Learning Institutes*

Location • Nationwide

Serving • Older Adults

Web • [www.osherfoundation.org](http://www.osherfoundation.org)

Now a network of 117 higher education institutions spread across the country, Osher Lifelong Learning Institutes (OLLI) offer college-level courses designed to appeal to the interests and experience of older adults. OLLI programs are adapted to the needs and desires of the communities they serve, but they benefit from OLLI's *National Resource Center*, which provides a network for sharing innovations in lifelong learning and also sponsors an annual conference. The institutions comprising OLLI range from top research universities to community colleges, and all provide unique programs.

Duke University's is one of the most successful Osher Lifelong Learning Institutes in the country. The program began as the Duke Institute for Learning in Retirement, which was founded in 1977 as a joint venture between Duke Continuing Education and the Center for the Study of Aging and Human Development. Duke became one of the Osher Lifelong Learning Institutes in 2004.

As one of the differences between older and younger students is the depth of their life experiences, Duke's Osher program uses a study-group model that encourages the discussion and exploration of lecture materials. This is "learning for the love of it." Members are sometimes teachers, often help select subject matter, and support the program in many other ways. Courses cover a broad range of fields, including natural science, art history, literature, philosophy and economics, and also include more practical courses such as computer literacy. Other options include fine arts classes, social events, guest speakers, and more. Chicago's OLLI program at Northwestern University follows a similar study-group model, recruiting participants to lead discussion groups based on weekly readings. Experienced coordinators develop course topics and create syllabi to build a general framework for study.

Another Osher program, at Berkshire Community College (BCC) in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, makes full use of academic resources in the region through a partnership with Williams College and other local institutions. BCC's program also supplements course offerings with special events like snowshoeing, and trips

to Boston and New York City, where participants enjoy museums, concerts, and social engagement. The trips out of the area are especially popular, as they are an enormous boon to older adults, who are often unable to drive or are uncomfortable with the idea of driving long distances.

For the Osher Foundation, creating relationships with colleges and universities has benefits beyond access to academic resources. Institutions of higher education have financial and physical resources that ensure long-term support for funded programs. In fact, in order to receive funding, host institutions must dedicate office space, classrooms, and other in-kind resources that ensure that they are committed to their lifelong learning programs and to making an impact in the communities they serve. This strategy allows the Osher Foundation to leverage its resources and maximize the effectiveness of its financial support.

Each year, the *National Resource Center* convenes leaders of OLLI programs for discussions about advances in lifelong learning, current and future challenges, the role of volunteers in the Institutes, and fundraising and other relevant topics. Through online forums and its annual conferences, the *Resource Center* enhances the capacity of Institutes and also influences the growing field of lifelong learning. ■

University:  
*Project SHINE (Students Helping  
in the Naturalization of Elders)*

Location • Nationwide  
Serving • Older Adults and Immigrants  
Web • [www.projectshine.org](http://www.projectshine.org)

In the early 1980s, Nancy Henkin, founder and director of the Intergenerational Center at Temple University, was shocked by the news that loneliness and social isolation led an elderly Asian woman to commit suicide, at a time when it was commonly assumed that older immigrants were part of tight-knit and supportive communities. Henkin realized that older immigrants often struggle with language barriers, changes in customs, and differences in social roles more than their younger counterparts, and began working to establish a program that could support them. Project SHINE was launched in 1985, to reach out and provide aging immigrants with language and cultural resources to help them adapt in their new community.

The SHINE program partners with Temple University's Intergenerational Center, a relationship which provides institutional support and facilitates recruitment of students as volunteer tutors. From SHINE's perspective, older immigrants are a community resource. One of SHINE's priorities is to enhance the communication skills of older immigrants—who then will be better able to give back to the communities in which they live.

Since its creation 25 years ago, Project SHINE has been replicated and is currently working with 17 higher education institutions in 15 U.S. cities, providing programming for 2,500 older immigrants annually. Since 1997, SHINE has engaged 10,000 students and enriched the lives of 40,000 immigrants.<sup>20</sup> One of the strengths of the organization is its ability to develop partnerships and working relationships with a variety of institutions in addition to colleges and universities. Americorps and Learn and Serve America, and over two hundred ethnic, community, and faith-based organizations have supported SHINE's work. It has also attracted funders, including the MetLife Foundation, the Corporation for National and Community Service, and New York Life. The Migration Policy Institute honored SHINE's groundbreaking work, in May 2010, with the prestigious E Pluribus Unum Prize.

Project SHINE helps older immigrants across the country adapt to their communities by recruiting college students to tutor older immigrants in English, work skills, and other aspects of cultural literacy. SHINE also pursues its mission to better integrate older immigrants through disseminating research and publishing reports that raise awareness and provide guidance for communities seeking to reach out to this vulnerable population.

As part of its mission to ease the integration of older immigrants into American society, Project SHINE has established the following goals:

- Promote intercultural and intergenerational understanding within diverse communities;
- Improve the ability of older immigrants to access healthcare, exercise their rights, and perform their responsibilities as family and community members;



- Increase the academic knowledge, personal growth, and civic engagement of college students;
- Enhance the ability of faculty members to create stronger links between community service and academic coursework; and
- Build the capacity of community colleges and universities to develop sustainable, mutually beneficial partnerships with immigrant communities.

Chinese older adults teach Tai Chi to Temple University students. Courtesy of Project SHINE.

Project SHINE pursues these goals through four programs: *ESL & Citizenship*, *Workforce Development*, *Health Literacy*, and *Civic Engagement*. Students tutor older immigrants in English and literacy skills for *ESL & Citizenship* and cover civics and United States history to prepare them for the citizenship exam. *Workforce Development* helps immigrants understand the American approach to job searches, resume preparation, and employer interviews. Through *Civic Engagement*, SHINE volunteers help older immigrants acquire the skills and expertise that can support their ability to participate in civic roles.

Research on the challenges faced by older immigrants and the barriers that exist between immigrant and American-born populations has also become a central component of SHINE's work. Through SHINE's *Health Literacy Program*, for instance, immigrants whose countries of origin span the globe met with health providers to discuss the obstacles to communicating in a medical context. This dialogue generated strategies for both immigrants and hospitals to improve communication. The findings are now being incorporated into SHINE's programs. More recently, Project SHINE found that intergenerational conflict was a significant problem in immigrant and refugee communities, and is developing strategies to promote improved relations between the generations.

SHINE continues to evolve. Through research and pilot programs, the organization identifies new directions for programming, including provision of training and technical assistance. Through its commitment to serving the needs of older immigrants, Project SHINE has become a national leader, enabling the organization to change perceptions of older immigrants, improve their quality of life, and help them to take an active part in their communities. ■

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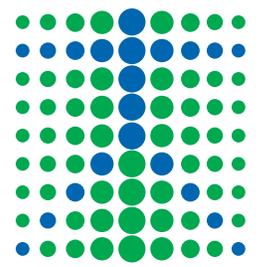
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