



MetLife Foundation

Creative Aging Program

2010 Grantees

Arts Council of Greater Baton Rouge, Baton Rouge, LA

The Arts Council of Greater Baton Rouge recognizes the crucial relationship between creativity and quality of life among older adults and has designed its creative aging program to support this belief. Through two 12-week sessions, older adults will learn visual arts concepts and techniques, such as the color wheel and perspective, using masterworks as examples. The first session will focus on landscapes, the second on three-dimensional works. Using works by historical masters to teach artistry proved to be effective with older adults during the pilot program conducted last year as it allowed the teaching artist to incorporate elements of art history and appreciation into the classes. Each session will culminate with an exhibit of student work to celebrate and demonstrate participant learning, promote the program, and to provide participants the opportunity to engage the Baton Rouge community.

Baltimore Clayworks, Baltimore, MD

Since 1980, Baltimore Clayworks has been providing low-income communities opportunities to cope with symptoms of stress, enhance cognitive abilities, and build self-esteem and joy through working with ceramics. The organization has partnered with the Pimlico Road Community Development Corporation to provide clay instruction for seniors since the 1990's. Now, Baltimore Clayworks is expanding its programming for older adults through a new partnership with the Jubilee Arts Center. Pimlico Road seniors adept at working with clay will mentor those older adults at Jubilee who are new to the medium. Seniors from both organizations will have the opportunity to connect with clay and with each other, improving their quality of life and strengthening the community.

Brooklyn-Queens Conservatory of Music, Brooklyn, NY

With its *Music Partners* program, the Brooklyn-Queens Conservatory of Music (BQCM) engages seniors and staff from the Prospect Hills Senior Services Center (PHSSC) in choral singing. Eighty-five percent of the older adult participants live at or below the poverty line. The program encourages self expression, camaraderie, socialization, community involvement, and, through public performances, raises awareness of the benefits of creative aging. Inspired by the film *Young at Heart*, the senior singers have worked with the BQCM and PHSSC to develop a plan to more than double the size of the chorus, increase the number of public performances and reach a higher level of professionalism.

CityDance Ensemble, Washington, DC

In efforts to develop a long-term sustainable Creative Aging program, CityDance Ensemble and their partner, Iona Senior Services, have created *Dance for Life*, a modern dance class for Washington, DC, adults ages 60 and older.

Participants will increase their mastery of modern dance skills and learn to tell their personal stories using a dance vocabulary. The program will culminate with an intergenerational gathering of the older dancers and their friends and family as well as the children and youth students at CityDance. CityDance FilmWORKS videographers will film older adults as they teach their children and grandchildren their story/choreography. Ultimately, the video will be used to raise awareness about the benefits of creative aging.

Kairos Dance Theatre, Minneapolis, MN

The Dancing Heart is a pioneering, national award-winning, evidence-based dance, theater, music and story arts program. The program's original intention was to serve frail elders and those with Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia, their families, and caregivers. Elders participating in *The Dancing Heart* have experienced improved quality of life, reduced healthcare costs, a stronger sense of community, and increased joy and satisfaction. Kairos will expand the program to serve less frail, younger participants who are in assisted living facilities with the goal of helping these seniors *maintain* their health as they age. The program will combine artistic expression and learning with the health-enhancing benefits of dance and music. In doing so, it will offer a safe and fun environment in which elders feel empowered to explore new ways of moving, thus transforming how they perceive their own physical abilities.

Longy School of Music, Cambridge, MA

The *Singing for Seniors* program, offered by the Longy School of Music in partnership with the United South End Settlements (USES), brings music and its intrinsic benefits to seniors of the greater Boston area. After participating in the first year of the program, many elders reported that their voices had become stronger and more stable, allowing them to engage socially with greater confidence. This year, working with Daniel Kempler, Ph.D, Professor and Chair, Communication Science and Disorders at Emerson College, Longy will study the relationship between the study of singing and strengthening the aging voice. Longy and USES anticipate that participants, during the second year of the program, will continue to improve their musical skills and develop stronger speaking voices and an increased well-being.

MacPhail Center for Music, Minneapolis, MN

Now in its second year, MacPhail Center for Music's *Music for Life* program has grown immensely, providing sequential instruction to 420 Minneapolis-area seniors at three residential communities. *Music for Life* improves cognition, memory, communication, motor skills, circulation, social skills, and emotional well-being in its participants, all while building musical skills not often addressed in traditional music therapy. Participants will sing, play instruments, write lyrics, and compose. MacPhail will develop *Music for Life* into an easily-replicable model complete with a teacher training manual to encourage and facilitate older adult music education programs nationwide.

Nevada Senior Services, Las Vegas, NV

Nevada Senior Services (NSS) is a collection of centers that support senior citizens in their efforts to remain independent with dignity, maintain quality of life and avoid institutionalization. In partnership with Freedom Dance Company, NSS will offer a creative dance class that will allow elders to learn dance while exercising at their own pace, moving in ways that feel comfortable to their own bodies, and stimulating their brains through problem-solving.

In addition to enhancing self-esteem, reducing depression, improving balance, spatial awareness and mobility the classes will also include the “Brain Dance,” a series of movement and patterns that help the brain and improve memory.

New Orleans Ballet Association, New Orleans, LA

In January of 2008, the New Orleans Ballet Association extended its partnership with the New Orleans Recreation Department beyond youth offerings to provide dance education to older adults. Of the senior participants, over 60% had never before taken part in an arts course. Through sensitive, strategic structuring of classes which include a full hour of warm-up and stretching, participants in the Senior Program learn the art of dance while simultaneously strengthening their bodies, minds, and social support systems. Participants will learn balance, strength, mobility, flexibility, musicality, rhythm, tempo force of movement, and fluidity. The program also improves memory, as each movement studied during class builds upon the next to create a dance that becomes the foundation for performances. In 2010 NOBA will grow the program further to include intergenerational opportunities as well as culturally diverse workshops lead by guest teaching artists.

The Phoenix Conservatory of Music, Phoenix, AZ

The Phoenix Conservatory of Music will partner with the Beatitudes, a campus that provides residential and healthcare services for older adults. This partnership was initiated following a poll indicating that the members of the Beatitudes Campus were highly interested in arts and culture programs. The musical focus of the program is participant driven (based on survey results) and includes choral music, drumming, and conducting. Program activities, grounded in sequential arts instruction, will allow participants to actively create music, discover the relevance of the music to their daily lives, and be able to evaluate their work and the work of others. The program aims to instill a feeling of improvement in overall health, raise spirits, inspire reflection and creative communication, and eliminate loneliness and isolation.

Progressive Arts Alliance, Cleveland, OH

The Progressive Arts Alliance’s participant-driven *Music of My Mind: Creating Musical Biographies* program is a dynamic oral history film project that promotes intergenerational learning and communication by providing hands-on training in media art skills for elders and teens working in partnership to produce documentary films about popular music and American culture. This year, *Music of My Mind* program will serve 30 seniors from three different retirement communities. Participants will experience a real-life working environment of documentary film production, creating a film they can share with each other, their families, and the community for years to come.

The Village of Arts and Humanities, Philadelphia, PA

Due to the prevalence of youth violence and drug activity on the streets of North Philadelphia, older adults often feel overpowered and limited in their ability to be heard. In this environment, the Village of Arts and Humanities recognized an opportunity for older adults to express their creative voice and build positive relationships with youth in a shared creative language. *I AM North Philadelphia* is a series of skill-based photography workshops that will culminate in a citywide exhibition celebrating neighborhood living figures. Elders also will engage in bi-weekly

discussions with teen photographers to discuss their work with the hope that similarities and differences between photos produced by each generation will encourage communication and mutual appreciation.