

Serving Older Adults: This project is a collaborative effort by community arts education centers and senior centers who are all participants in the Creative Arts and Aging Network (CAAN). CAAN is a non-profit agency formed to increase older adults' access to arts programs and to involve professional artists and art educators in work with older men and women. The lead agency for this collaboration is Main Line Art Center (MLAC). Partner agencies are Havertown Senior Center through the Mid County Senior Services (MCSS), and the Wayne Senior Center.

MLAC is a community arts education center, providing creative enrichment opportunities for more than 4,000 students through 600+ classes and workshops annually. Our mission is to foster creativity for individuals of all ages and abilities and to celebrate and strengthen the essential role of visual art in community life. MLAC has a long history of effective arts programming for special populations, including at-risk youth, adults who are blind and visually impaired, and individuals with special needs. MLAC serves "inner ring" suburbs which are experiencing rapid growth in the population aged 55+. As we analyzed the needs of these communities, we identified the older population as one that is under-served with art programs and one which can benefit in unique ways from participating in the arts. MLAC is actively working to increase programming for older adults as it works towards its strategic goals of 1) bold and robust programming, 2) increased regional visibility, 3) greater institutional viability and 4) expanded facilities.

Target Population: Delaware County is home to about 86,000 adults aged 55+. An extensive survey by a local health planning agency indicates that about 2/3 of these adults are healthy and active. The program's target audience will be drawn from this population. We will recruit older people who are able to fully participate in the program and integrate socially with other program participants. Participants will be older adults who, through this program, will develop capacities to further nurture themselves and their communities. We anticipate this will be demonstrated as class members continue to participate in arts programs following the pilot project, and remain healthy and active in their communities. Specifically, we will draw participants from the active older adult participants at two senior community centers; Havertown Senior Center and the Wayne Senior Center. We will also use targeted distribution of flyers and promotional materials to groups and clubs of well elders, and will use local media coverage. At the Havertown Center, the teaching artists will offer an exploratory class prior to the beginning of the program, to give interested elders a chance to try the class and become inspired by the opportunities it offers.

Artistic Discipline: We are very fortunate to have two talented teaching artists with a passion for working with older adults. Kezia Lechner is a visual artist who works in both two and three dimensional media. Sheila Zagar is a dancer and choreographer. In their own work, and in teaching groups of older adults, both have experimented with integrating visual art, such a masks and totems, with music, movement and the spoken word. In this class, they envision an autobiographical focus, exploring personal identity through selected visual art and movement activities, such as portrait painting and instruction in emotional movement expressions. The class will emphasize the creative process. Students will create art throughout the project, which will end with a movement performance and a final visual piece. The instructors will approach this final culmination as a part of the creative process, rather than focusing on it as an end result.



This helps to eliminate the fear and restraint that is sometimes born out of having to present a finished “product.”

Site: The project will take place in one of MLAC’s eight studios. The studios can accommodate the needs of both the visual arts and movement/dance aspects of the program. The Center is fully ADA accessible and can accommodate anyone wishing to participate. During the course of the 12-week program, 20 older adults will meet once a week for a 90 minute session.

Sustainability: The partnership is committed to sustaining and expanding this program. MLAC and Mid County Senior Services each have a development staff person. Foundation and corporate prospects have been identified, and proposals are planned to fund the both the program’s continuation at MLAC and its replication. Staff from the Wayne Senior Center and the Wayne Art Center has participated in the development of the project and are very excited about working together to replicate this program in their community. The Wayne Art Center is another strong Delaware County community arts education program and collaborates with the Wayne Senior Center, a vibrant organization serving older men and women. After the completion of the program, it is our goal to integrate participants into regularly offered classes at both MLAC and Wayne Art Center. The partners will also explore the role that class fees can play in sustaining and replicating the project (scholarships will ensure that lower income elders can participate.)

Team Experience: This project has a highly experienced team. Both teaching artists have a passion for working with older adults and many years of experience. Kezia Lechner has been a ceramic sculptor for many years. In the last 2 decades, her work has expanded to include drawing, painting, writing, sound and performance work. She has been an “Arts in Education” roster artist for the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts for more than 15 years. Most of her residencies were in senior centers and schools, where they were so popular that there were always waiting lists. In 2005, through CAAN she facilitated an “Art of Aging” project in collaboration with the National Center for Creative Aging’s “Creativity Matters Campaign.” The project involved older adults from 7 senior centers in creating a quilt for display at the 2005 White House Conference on Aging.

Sheila Zagar has an extensive history as a teacher and is an adept facilitator who tailors her classes to the needs of participants. Her classes focus on the pleasure of moving, discovering, lifting and healing the body, mind and spirit. She incorporates creative movement with rehabilitative and body maintenance techniques to create a safe foundation in which students explore their physical, mental and emotional potential. Sheila participated in the 2005 joint conference of the American Society on Aging (ASA) and the National Council on Aging, coordinating an evening of older adult performances including both local and out-of state groups . The evening performance was entitled “Creative Sparks of Aging,” and was sponsored by CAAN and the National Center for Creative Aging.

Rennie Cohen, the designated Project Manager for this group, serves on the board of the National Center for Creative Aging and is a member of NCOA’s Senior Center Advisory Board. In Philadelphia, she serves as the Treasurer of CAAN. Rennie has over thirty years experience working on older adult community services issues, with 29 years spent as Executive Director of



Center in the Park, a senior center in Philadelphia. While there, she created model older adult arts and intergenerational programs. Rennie has worked on behalf of those 55+ on the local, state and national levels. She co-chaired Pennsylvania's Senior Center Task Force from 1988 to 1993, served as vice president of the National Council on Aging's National Institute of Senior Centers, and is on the executive committee of the American Society on Aging's educational unit LEARN.

We will contract with Suzanne Hayward to serve as the project evaluator. She is the Program Director at the Community Arts Center (CAC) in Wallingford, PA. Since 2003 she has been directing educational programs at the center, including developing, implementing, and evaluating a wide range of visual arts programs for students of all ages. Suzanne manages a faculty of 80 teaching artists, directs the Summer Spree visual arts camp for children, and helped establish the ART Start preschool program at CAC. She works with schools, community organizations, and senior centers to design outreach programs that meet the specific needs of each group. Suzanne is particularly interested in the connections between creative expression and wellness in children and older adults. She has received training in educational and program assessment, develops surveys for program evaluation, and regularly conducts quantitative and qualitative evaluation of programming at her center.

Community Engagement: MLAC has successfully developed several programs that bring participatory art classes to special populations in the Greater-Philadelphia Region. "Creating in Clay," held at the Delaware County Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired since 2002, involves students in projects that use tactile media such as clay and mosaic. Created in 2001, MLAC provides after school arts classes every Friday during the academic year to at-risk youth in a partnership with Project H.O.M.E., one of Philadelphia's premiere agencies serving homeless families. In 2004, MLAC formed a partnership with CareLink, an organization serving adults with mental illness, physical disabilities or developmental delays. The program has been a great success. Participants have completed mosaic murals now installed at 3 community sites. MLAC also carries out its vision of "Art for Everyone" through a scholarship program that awards about \$10,000 annually to help lower income people participate in arts programs.

Evaluation: One of MLAC's programs, entitled *Special Sundays*, was created in 2001 to provide regular art classes for children with cognitive and physical disabilities. To evaluate the success of this program, MLAC created a pre and post evaluation to measure the impact of the program. Each session, the Program Staff interviews each parent, prior to their child's participation, to get an idea of their child's specific needs. This ensures that the class environment and projects can be tailored to each student individually. After the children complete an 8-10 week session, parents are again interviewed regarding any changes in their child's progress. MLAC is also working with Project H.O.M.E on evaluation of the after school arts program, to begin this year.

Partnership experience: As discussed above, MLAC has significant experience in successful partnerships with non-arts organizations.

Relationship to current programs: Currently, MLAC enrolls older adults in its classes (about 30-40 % of students are aged 60+). However, we have not developed programs specifically for this population. We are very excited about the opportunity to do so, in conjunction with strong partners in our community.

