

# Arts + Social Impact Explorer Fact Sheet

HEALTH & WELL-BEING

## ARTS + AGING

### OVERVIEW

Ten thousand people turn 65 each day, and the fastest-growing age group in the United States is women 85 years of age and older. By 2050, the U.S. population over 65 will more than double, to 86.7 million people, and the global average lifespan is expected to extend by 10 more years. This increase in an aging population will weigh heavily on the already-stressed social services and medical sectors, as well as on the caregivers of these older adults.

Getting older can be both a joy and a challenge. It's a new time of celebration, freedom (for many) from daily work, the opportunity to learn new skills, explore new places, and enjoy life. It can also be a time of periods of loneliness, declining health, and the grappling with the end of life. The arts are there for all of it.

Arts participation can improve health, decrease depression and loneliness, and increase participation in other kinds of activities. It also has been shown to decrease anxiety, which affects cognitive performance and decision-making, and lower the risk of dementia. Using the arts to engage with aging effectively provides life-long learning, increases social engagement, decreases loneliness and isolation, and improves frail health and memory loss at home or in care facilities.

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## IMPACT POINTS

### \$43.3 BILLION IN SAVINGS FROM REDUCED DOCTOR VISITS

After a year of singing in a chorale, older adults visited their doctor an average of 2.5 times less per year. This saves \$500 per person, or up to \$43.3 billion for the 86.7 million older adults in the United States each year.<sup>1</sup>

### 63% REDUCED RISK OF DEMENTIA

Activities like dancing, playing an instrument, and reading lower the risk of dementia. Older adults who do at least 11 cognitive or physical activities per month are 63 percent less likely to have dementia.<sup>2</sup>

### ARTS MAKE LIFE BETTER

When older adults participate in the arts, they demonstrated statistically significant higher levels of five positive well-being indicators (interest, sustained attention, pleasure, self-esteem, and normalcy).<sup>3</sup>

### 10 WEEKS OF ARTS PARTICIPATION TO A STRONGER BRAIN

The arts literally make your brain grow. Participating in the visual arts for as little as 10 weeks has been shown to increase the resiliency and neural connectivity of the brain, making for increased self-awareness and better memory processing.<sup>4</sup>

### ARTS PROGRAMS IMPROVE THE HEALTH OF OLDER ADULTS

Professionally conducted participatory arts programs impact older adults by improving health, decreasing depression and loneliness, and increasing participation in other kind of activities.<sup>5</sup>

### ARTS KEEP PEOPLE ENGAGED IN LIFE

Research into social dancing shows that such activities lead older dancers to feel more engaged with their life and allows them to connect with pleasant memories while also building new ones in an active, social setting.<sup>6</sup>

# EXAMPLES OF PRACTICE

## Stagebridge, Oakland, CA



Stagebridge, the nation's oldest theater company of older adults, provides professionally taught classes for adults over 50, entertainment and

hands-on classes brought to community venues that serve both active and frail elders, and performance-based staff training to healthcare workers and senior services providers.

<http://www.stagebridge.org>

[info@stagebridge.org](mailto:info@stagebridge.org)

**image:** ©Stagebridge, Stuart Kandell

## MeetMe at MoMA, New York, NY



MoMA's MeetMe at MoMA program (2007–2014) provided education programs for people living with Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia and their caregivers. The resources MoMA shares from their experiences are valuable tools to aid others in forming programs for this population, including video from related special initiatives and a series of instructional training videos on how to plan and implement art discussion and art-making programs for this audience.

<https://www.moma.org/meetme/index>  
[accessprograms@moma.org](mailto:accessprograms@moma.org)

**image:** Group tour from the Meet Me at MoMA program. Photo: Jason Brownrigg.

## Young@Heart Chorus (Y@H), Florence, MA



Featured in a E\*TRADE commercial during the 2018 Super Bowl, Y@H is a community group that formed in 1982. Since then, the chorus has

performed in Europe, Australia, and Canada. The group often works with other community groups in their Massachusetts town to create mash-ups that are fabulous forums for singing at all ages.

<http://www.youngatheartchorus.com/gallery.php>  
[info@youngatheartchorus.com](mailto:info@youngatheartchorus.com)

**image:** Young@Heart at Hampshire County Jail - May 2015

## TimesSlips, Milwaukee, WI



TimesSlips infuses creativity into elder care relationships and systems. Founded by MacArthur Fellow Anne Basting, TimeSlips provides hope and improves well-being through creativity and meaningful connection.

<http://www.timeslips.org/>  
[info@timeslips.org](mailto:info@timeslips.org)

**image:** Members of a TimesSlips, Milwaukee, WI, workshop explore their creativity. ©TimeSlips

## Cognitive Dynamics, Tuscaloosa, AL



Cognitive Dynamics is a program that uses various artforms to work with people with cognitive disorders, such as Alzheimer's, and their caregivers. The program provides education, research, and supportive, innovative care models that promote human dignity, especially through expressive arts and storytelling.

[cognitivedynamics.org/home/](http://cognitivedynamics.org/home/)  
[info@cognitivedynamics.org](mailto:info@cognitivedynamics.org)

**image:** Man works on water color as part of his art therapy. ©Cognitive Dynamics.

**top image:** ©Stagebridge, Stuart Kandell

### REFERENCES

1. Cohen, G., Perlstein, S., Chapline, J., Kelly, J., Firth, K., & Simmens, S. (2006, December 1). The Impact of Professionally Conducted Cultural Programs on the Physical Health, Mental Health, and Social Functioning of Older Adults [Electronic version]. *The Gerontologist*, 46(6), 726–734. Retrieved 26 January 2018 from <https://academic.oup.com/gerontologist/article/46/6/726/584645>
2. Verghese, J. (2006). Cognitive and Mobility Profile of Older Social Dancers. *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* 54(8), 1241.
3. Kinney, J. M., & Rentz, C. A. (2005). Observed well-being among individuals with dementia: Memories in the Making, an art program, versus other structured activity. *American Journal of Alzheimer's Disease and Other Dementias*, 20(4), 220–227. Reviewed 18 May 2018 in [http://ns1.benrose.org/KPI/Castora-Binkley\\_2010\\_Impact\\_of\\_arts\\_participation\\_on\\_health.pdf](http://ns1.benrose.org/KPI/Castora-Binkley_2010_Impact_of_arts_participation_on_health.pdf).
4. Bolwerk, A. et al. How Art Changes Your Brain: Differential Effects of Visual Art Production and Cognitive Art Evaluation on Functional Brain Connectivity. *PLOS ONE*, 2014, 9(7). Retrieved March 30, 2018, from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4077746/>

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# READING LIST

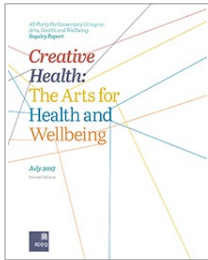
## The Creativity and Aging Study



This 2006 study conducted by the National Endowment for the Arts and George Washington University demonstrated strikingly positive differences in the those involved in intensive participatory arts programs.

<https://www.americansforthearts.org/node/100548>

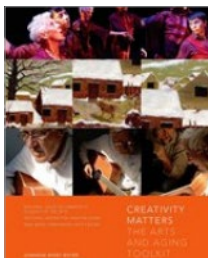
## Creative Health: The Arts for Health and Wellbeing



This 2017 study out of the UK is the result of a three-year inquiry into the state of practice and research at the intersection of the arts and social care and provides recommendations on improvements of policy and practice.

<https://www.americansforthearts.org/node/101135>

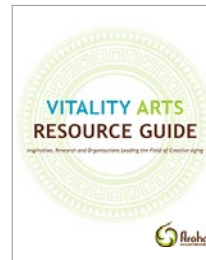
## Creativity Matters: Arts and Aging Toolkit



This comprehensive resource provides tools and case studies on how to create effective arts programming for older adults.

<https://www.americansforthearts.org/node/100558>

## Vitality Arts Resource Guide: Inspiration, Research, and Organizations Leading the Field of Creative Aging



This resource from Aroha Philanthropies is designed to provide an overview on the field of creative aging. It provides a strong platform to find inspiration, discover current research, and locate leading organizations in the field.

<https://www.americansforthearts.org/node/101139>

## Arts & Culture



This resource from the organization Grantmakers in Aging provides an overview of the impact of the arts in aging, as well as research, participating organizations, and funders in the space.

<https://www.americansforthearts.org/node/101140>

top image: Young@Heart Chorus (Y@H), Florence, MA

REFERENCES continued

5. Cohen, G. (2006). The Creativity and Aging Study: The Impact of Professionally Conducted Cultural Programs on Older Adults. Washington, DC: George Washington University.

6. Skinner, J (2013). Social Dance for Successful Aging: The Practice of Health, Happiness, and Social Inclusion Amongst Senior Citizens. Anthropology and Aging Quarterly, 34(1) 1-8-29. Retrieved 18 May 2018 from [https://pure.qub.ac.uk/portal/files/130672235/Social\\_Dance\\_for\\_Successful\\_Aging.pdf](https://pure.qub.ac.uk/portal/files/130672235/Social_Dance_for_Successful_Aging.pdf).



# ORGANIZATIONS

## Grantmakers in Aging

Dedicated to promoting and strengthening grantmaking for an aging society, Grantmakers in Aging works to ensure that older people have the ability to amplify their creative potential by leading and serving a diverse network of organizations and individuals to advance the creative aging field.

<http://giaging.org/>

## National Center for Creative Aging

This group is dedicated to fostering an understanding of the vital relationship between creative expression and healthy aging and is developing programs that build on this understanding.

<http://creativeaging.org/>

## Vitality Arts/Aroha Philanthropies

This program of Aroha Philanthropies compiles information on artful aging and funds projects centered on creative processes that bring connection, improve health and well-being, and provide a renewed sense of purpose to older adults in community and residential settings.

<https://www.vitalityarts.org/>

## The National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a)

Identifies and promotes the most up-to-date tools and strategies for engaging older adults in creativity. It is a clearinghouse for trends, resources, and best practices.

<https://www.n4a.org/engaged>

## National Guild for Community Arts Education

Works to ensure that all people have opportunities to maximize their creative potential. It is increasingly focusing on creative aging and lifelong learning.

[nationalguild.org/About.aspx](http://nationalguild.org/About.aspx)

## National Organization for Arts in Health

Provides transformational leadership to bring the field of arts in health together, and to move the field forward. Our focus is on the future of arts, health, and wellbeing; and creating tangible impact from our goals and initiatives.

<https://thenoah.net>

**top image:** Group tour from the Meet Me at MoMA program. Photo: Jason Brownrigg.

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Americans for the Arts developed this Fact Sheet as part of the Arts + Social Impact Explorer.

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