



## Sheridan Elder Research Centre for Creative Aging



Dear Members,

As we approach another holiday season, I would like to thank our readers for helpful comments and encouragement. The SERCCA e-newsletter is beginning to gain ground in its readership. I would especially like to thank all of the contributors to date who have generously given their time to write interesting and informative articles. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Kathryn Warren-Norton, a Sheridan College student, for her contributions to this issue, specifically, the articles for the 'Creative Arts' and 'Movement Matters' segments.

However, we are still looking for more feedback. For those of you who have not yet completed the short survey, you can still do so by clicking [here](#). To encourage responses, we are now offering a chance to win one of 5 DVDs by Finis Jhung, featured in this issue's Movement Matters page. Once you have completed the survey, email me to let me know and I will enter your name. Those of you who have already completed the survey, let me know who you are and I will include your names in the raffle as well. We'd also like you to spread the word about SERCCA either by just telling people about us or by forwarding this newsletter to someone you think might be interested. Then let me know how you have 'taken action' and I will enter your name into a raffle for one of Finis Jhung's DVDs.

We here at SERCCA would like to wish you a Merry Christmas, a wonderful holiday season and all the very best for 2013.

Ann Anas, Editor

**To submit an article, or information about upcoming conferences, send an email to:**  
[ann.anas@sheridancollege.ca](mailto:ann.anas@sheridancollege.ca)

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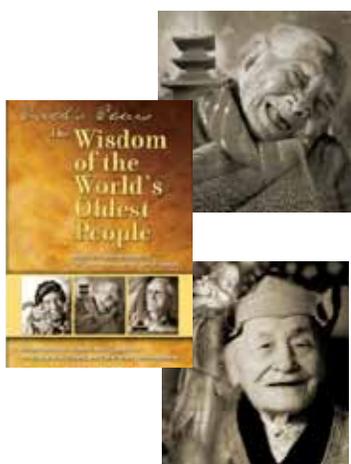
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**If you know someone who would like to receive our quarterly e-newsletter, send an email to:**  
[pat.spadafora@sheridancollege.ca](mailto:pat.spadafora@sheridancollege.ca)

# SERCCA News

## The Jerry Friedman Art Exhibit: **THE REACTION**



***We hosted a special evening to celebrate the exhibit's Canadian debut on Friday, September 21st. Here are some of the comments from the attendees:***

*"A classy evening showcasing positive images of aging. The Gallery coordinator said he hadn't heard this much buzz about a show in a long time."*

*"The pictures were very inspiring."*

*"It's amazing the things that these men and women had to witness in their lifetime and [they] still have the ability to share it with us."*

*"Very moving! There is beauty and strength in old age!"*

*"Everyone has a story and it was great to read their stories – I loved the spark in their eyes."*

*"Amazed of the fact that these are human beings just like us, can sustain life for so long, and look good doing it."*

*"Beautiful, so much energy here."*

*"It makes us feel a bit speechless. The staging and display of photos gives such prominence to the people themselves – Most appropriate."*

*"Each soul beautifully captured. I could've spent hours here."*



### **In Other News:**

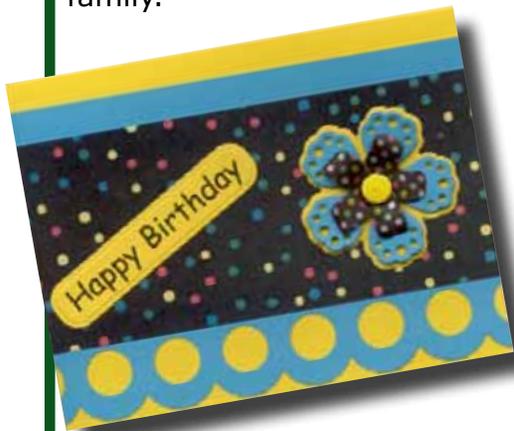
- In June, we carried out a follow-up study with the dance participants who had continued dancing on their own beyond our initial study two years ago. We are currently analyzing those results and preparing a manuscript for publication.
- We are currently applying for more funding for our arts projects.

# Creative Arts

## The Art of Card Making

**Carolyn Disher finds a creative way to stay in touch with friends and family.**

Seventeen years ago Carolyn Disher noticed a store window display on stamping. Stamping is an art using ink stamps on paper and enhancing the design by hand colouring. Intrigued, Carolyn signed up for the course and since then has pursued stamping with a passion. In the last seventeen years, she has created hundreds of beautiful cards for friends and family.



Carolyn has taken numerous courses and attended conventions throughout the United States to further her creative and witty designs. She has added embossing and elaborate cutouts to enhance them. Combining her proficiency with computers and her creative talent, she continues to come up with unique and personal designs.



Recently Carolyn has taken courses on metal art. She has expanded her creative talent to metal jewellery and journal covers. Always looking for new and interesting ideas, she has also enrolled in a variety of courses on book making, resulting in the creation of unique and beautiful journals.

Carolyn's cards are very individual and personal. "It can take between five minutes to an hour and a half to make the card," Carolyn states. It's the concept that takes the most time. Her ideas have included a 'Happy Chocolate Day' card with chocolate recipes enclosed. Another clever idea Carolyn had was a card reminding people to, "turn your clock back...I'm turning mine back to 21".

When asked what her favourite type of card is, without hesitation, she quickly answers "Christmas".

Creating cards not only keeps her in touch with friends and family, it also creates an opportunity to get together for monthly 'play dates' with other stamping enthusiasts. The 'play dates' are held at each others' homes monthly. According to Carolyn they end up being more about socializing than card creation.

Carolyn's cards have touched friends and family but also importantly, have inspired other family members to pick up the craft. When Carolyn was rushed for time one day, she asked her mother to help her colour the designs. Her mom was hooked. She is now doing her own stamping projects.



Carolyn loves to teach. In the future she plans to teach the art of stamping. If you are interested, Carolyn can be contacted at:

[disherjc@sympatico.ca](mailto:disherjc@sympatico.ca)



# Community Profile



## GRACE Grass Roots Art and Community Effort by Carol Putnam, Managing Director

GRACE began in 1975 at a nursing home located in Vermont's rural northeast (known as the 'Northeast Kingdom') not far from the Quebec, Canada border. Don Sunseri, a newly transplanted artist working at the nursing home, provided art materials, encouragement, and a supportive environment, letting residents explore and tap into their own reservoirs of creativity. As a result, they produced a stream of beautiful, often biographical art works which were later organized into exhibitions which traveled throughout the community.

Today, GRACE conducts more than 400 art workshops annually in northern Vermont bringing art-making to the places where people live and work: nursing homes, senior centers, mental health agencies and adult day centers.

In addition, each year GRACE staff conduct 100 community art workshops at its historic Old Firehouse facility, serving a diverse population of varying ages and abilities from the surrounding communities of Vermont's Northeast Kingdom.

**The GRACE mission is to discover, develop and promote self-taught artists, including elders and other special populations in Vermont.**



**David Classon,  
GRACE Workshop Artist**

GRACE workshops promote self-teaching and are not like conventional art classes. Workshop facilitators provide support and encouragement and help participants "**to be yourself and do it your own way!**" At some point in their lives, the elderly and those with disabilities may have lost some part of their independence and, therefore, the freedom to make choices for themselves.

Community art programs, like GRACE, are needed to bring people together for companionship and participation in a meaningful activity that can help individuals with social isolation while increasing self

realization and confidence. GRACE promotes the artists and their work at its **Old Firehouse Gallery**, and through hundreds of exhibits which have traveled to galleries, museums, and art centers - regionally, nationally, and internationally. Public showing of GRACE artists' work help foster community support and awareness, and provide encouragement and validation for the creating artists. They also provide an opportunity for non-traditional art audiences to experience art work made by people in their own community.

**For more information please visit us at our website:**  
[www.graceart.org](http://www.graceart.org)



**Lawrence Fogg,  
Snowmobiling and Skiing,  
Acrylic on slate**

# Movement Matters

## *At 75 years old, Finis Jhung continues to teach ballet*



"I've loved ballet since I was six years old", Finis Jhung announced during a recent CBS morning interview. Born in Honolulu, Hawaii, in 1937, Finis graduated with high honours from the University of Utah in 1959, where he majored in ballet. He has enjoyed a long and successful professional ballet career. Since 1972, he has been a mainstay of the New York dance scene.

Finis presents workshops for teachers and adult students at The Ailey Studios in NYC throughout the year. Finis recently worked on Broadway with the boys of *Billy Elliot: The Musical*.

Finis Jhung's passion for ballet has inspired many older adults to attend his ballet workshops. Referring to his older ballet students

like ballet dancers". One of his older ballet students stated, "It's definitely a way to age gracefully, and that's why I'm here".

*"I tell my students,  
I only have twenty  
more years to teach  
you know"*

This October Finis Jhung was featured on CBS's 'This Morning Show'. Click on the link below to access the interview.

[http://www.cb-snews.com/8301-505263\\_162-57527752/ballet-teacher-75-dances-straight-through-the-retirement-years/](http://www.cb-snews.com/8301-505263_162-57527752/ballet-teacher-75-dances-straight-through-the-retirement-years/)

Among his many videos, Finis Jhung has created workout, stretching videos for older adults.

In the 'Ten-Minute Stretch Break' video, he has choreographed fourteen slow and simple stretches that will reduce stress, relax tense muscles, and elevate your mind. The video is divided into four separate ten-minute breaks: two are done standing, one seated on a chair and one sitting and lying on the floor.



For more information about the videos, follow the link:

<http://finisjhung.com/catalog/>



## Performing Arts



**Ageing Under the Spotlight in the UK** ~by *Michelle Rickett\**  
(For the full article, [click here](#))

'*Ages and Stages*' is a partnership between **Keele University** and the **New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme**. We explored historical representations of ageing in the Vic's social documentaries produced from 1964-1965, then interviewed 95 older people who are or have been associated with the theatre as actors, employees, volunteers, long standing audience members or documentary sources. From our research data we created a new documentary performance, titled '*Our Age, Our Stage*', which explores ageing, intergenerational relations and the role the theatre has played – and continues to play – in the creative life of the people of North Staffordshire. This performance was acted by an intergenerational group, which included members of the **New Vic Youth Theatre** and older people who had been interviewed for our research.

*Rehearsing*



- What contribution do - and could - older people make to theatre?
- How are ageing and later life represented on stage?
- Can theatre and drama be used to promote creativity, communication and understanding between different generations?

These are some of the questions asked by the '*Ages and Stages*' project in North Staffordshire in the UK and funded by the New Dynamics of Ageing (NDA) programme.

This new documentary was toured round local community venues and performed to a capacity audience of 500 people at the New Vic in July 2012.

Our research revealed the significance of the theatre as an intimate public place, often described as being like 'home' or 'family'. The New Vic provided a sense of social occasion and ritual.

*"You're a family, you were part of a family that stretched decades but you feel as though you're part of it..."*  
(former actor)



Interviewees felt that the New Vic was a 'comfortable' place to visit alone, something particularly valued by older women. Theatre involvement was particularly significant during times of transition in later life and interviewees often became more involved with theatre after retirement or widowhood, either by volunteering or increasingly attending performances, talks and educational events. This could provide **continued social engagement** and **sense of value**, as well as **the opportunity to develop what had often been a lifelong interest in theatre and drama**. We found that the theatre provides a **sense of belonging** and, from that position of security, can help people build **confidence, develop new skills** and **take risks**. Interviewees also associated their theatre involvement with increased feelings of **well-being, self-esteem** and **vitality**.

The '*Ages and Stages*' team have been awarded an additional year's funding from the **UK Arts and Humanities Research Council** to establish a permanent intergenerational company at the New Vic Theatre, develop a new performance piece and professional training course, and scope out the idea of holding a 'Creative Age Festival' in North Staffordshire.

\* **Dr. Michelle Rickett** is the Research Associate for the Ages and Stages Project.  
For more information, go to: <http://www.agesandstagesproject.blogspot.ca/>

# Inspirations

'Creativity and Aging' by Jean Stafford



**Jean Stafford**

I saw my mother lose interest in reading, television and gardening in her late 70's. Moving to a nursing home far away from me meant just maintenance. This left me with the nagging question of how I could have helped her. To be engaged fully in life at an older age with great passion and interest, barring serious health challenges, I now believe, can be achieved.

Some studies have shown that creativity declines sharply as we age\*. Our habit of fact memorizing, reading the same genre of books, socializing with the same people or having the same hobbies, may contribute to this result. However, my friends and art teacher wonderfully illustrate creativity at an older age:

**Elsa:** Late this summer, I spoke with an 85-year-old friend, Elsa, who lives alone on 40 acres of land. Why has she survived so well? Elsa attends classes at the local University; she walks to the bus stop; health is a priority; cooking hearty meals is a necessity. Elsa also pursues

spiritual interests and tends to her garden. When she injured her foot, I asked how I could be of assistance. Her response was to help plant a new tulip garden she had just designed. We persevered through a very hot afternoon, weedy overgrowth and Elsa's 10 minute rest periods. The tulip garden was complete by dinner time. Her fortitude was greater than the foot injury, other health concerns and the heat. The beautiful scrapbook Elsa's family had made to honour her was a testament to her abilities!

**Carole:** Another mid-70's friend, Carole, asked me to write a poem to commemorate the 2nd anniversary of her husband's passing, as she did not feel up to the task. Carole was delighted with the poem I wrote. But the next day, she apologized, saying, graciously, that she was not going to use my poem, and that she had written one after all! As Carole was reading it to me, I could feel her love and caring shining through. I remembered that she had been a musician in her youth. Her sudden inspiration and ability to find expression and rhythm in words, was truly amazing.

**Sybil:** Recently, I visited the Joshua Creek Heritage Art Centre in rural Oakville where I met Sybil Rampen, age 83, a beautiful artist, teacher and founder of this haven. She had studied in Paris, London and taught at Sheridan College. Her deep well of creativity never ceases

to flow. I immediately joined fall classes and continued with these highly creative sessions, inspired by nature, watercolours, aquarelles and a printing press. The artists here, many older than my 72 years, love self-expression and possess a willingness to share their talents. **Betty**, at 94, drives and plays golf!

While teaching yoga, I sometimes encounter students who are 'stuck' in life. For them, taking that first step to try something new can be a frightening experience. Gentle and continued encouragement can be so beneficial. Practicing doing things for the very first time, just like in Jamie Lee Curtis and Laura Cornell's new children's book, "**My Brave Year of Firsts**", helps one to get started on the road to personal change, where confidence can be gained and creativity expanded. The book is not only inspiring for young children, but also for adults.

When our lives become, 'same old, same old', we need to breathe new energy into it by seeing life as children view it with spontaneity and natural playfulness. Discovering a new activity, finding our passion and getting involved can be so rewarding.

We all have the potential to be creative, no matter what our age. By topping up our brains with new learning and skills and by flipping on that inner creative switch, we will reap the benefits of a happier and more satisfying life.

*Inspire others to do the same!*

\* See **Breakpoint and Beyond** by George Land and Beth Jarman (1992).



## From Our Bookshelf

*Articles and websites of interest  
in the field of Creative Aging*

### ARTICLES

**Beard, R. (2012). Art therapies and dementia care: A systematic review. *Dementia, 11(5), 633-656.***

This article reviews the literature between 1990 and 2010.

**Duffey, T. Somody, C. & Clifford S. (2008). Conversations with my father: Adapting a musical chronology and the emerging life song with older adults. *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health, 2(4), 45-63.***

The authors illustrate how grown children can use music to connect with their parents.

**Engelman, M. (2001). Here's to the Belleville Ladies. *Activities, Adaptation & Aging 24(4), 19-26.***

"The subjective experiences and observations that have come from working with the Belleville Ladies gives evidence that creativity is an innate, natural, and joyful part of growing older."

### WEBSITES

<http://www.aftaarts.org>

AFTA engages older adults in health improvement and life enhancement through the arts.

<http://www.bronxarts.org/sparc.asp>

Seniors Partnering with Artists Citywide (SPARC), a community arts engagement program that places artists in residence at senior centers

<http://www.cecd-society.org/PDF/2012-CECD-Mini-conference-UBC-Summary.pdf>

The Society for the Arts in Dementia Care held a one day mini-conference in August, 2012.

<http://www.maturityanditsmuse.org/>

Founded in 2009 to establish a film festival that will present a positive look at aging.

<http://www.paltoronto.org/>

"Nurturing the life and spirit of our performing arts community"

## Upcoming Events

**February 10-12, 2013 Sixth Annual International Conference on Positive Aging, Los Angeles, California.**

**June 24-26, 2013, Culture, Health and Wellbeing International Conference, Bristol, U.K.**

**July 7-10, 2013, 5th International Conference on Ageing and Spirituality, Edinburgh, Scotland.**



## Creativity Café

*Pull up a chair, relax, pick up some new ideas and reflect on some of our favourite quotes!*

***"Art is something else. Art is fluid, transmutable, open ended, never complete, and never perfect. Art is an event."***

***~Robert Genn***

***"Creativity is inventing, experimenting, growing, taking risks, breaking rules, making mistakes, and having fun."***

***~Mary Lou Cook***

***"The object isn't to make art, it's to be in that wonderful state which makes art inevitable."***

***~Robert Henri***

***You never know what you will learn till you start writing. Then you discover truths you never knew existed.***

***~Anita Brookner***

**For additional information about SERC and SERCCA, visit our website at:**

**<http://serc.sheridancollege.ca>**

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