



## Sheridan Elder Research Centre for Creative Aging



**Dear Members,**

It's hard to believe we are distributing the second edition of the SERCCA newsletter. Three months go by quickly! Thank you to our many members who wrote in response to our launch in March. We were very encouraged by your feedback and are just as excited about the June edition as we were with our inaugural issue! We think you will find the current issue full of interesting stories and useful information.

Although we are still in the early days of establishing our newsletter, we have become increasingly aware of many inspiring individuals and programs regionally, nationally and globally. It's impossible to feature everything we discover and this is where you can help! Our goal is to create a newsletter that is as much informed by our readers as it is by those of us at the research centre.

***We welcome your submissions.***

***We encourage you to send articles, information about conferences, resources and tips for the Creative Café to:***

***Ann Anas, SERC Researcher and Editor of the SERCCA Newsletter  
ann.anas@sheridanc.on.ca***

For now, we wish all of you a safe and happy summer and look forward to connecting with you again in September.

***Pat Spadafora***

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***Do you want to join SERCCA and receive our quarterly newsletter?***

***Send an email to:***

***pat.spadafora@sheridanc.on.ca***

# SERCCA News

**Keep up to date with all that's going on at SERCCA**

## \* **Belly Dancing**

Thirteen women joined SERCCA for the introductory belly dancing workshop on Saturday, April 16<sup>th</sup>. Six of the participants made the trip from Riverside Glen, a Schlegel Villages location in Guelph, Ontario. [Danielle Lottridge](#), Ph.D., a post-doctoral researcher at Stanford University and professional belly dancer, taught the class.

If you are interested in finding a belly dance class in your community, check out this website for some ideas on where to start:

<http://www.bellydanceclasses.net/>



## \* **The Music Project**

In this pilot project, we explored active versus passive participation in music to determine the effects of music on mood.

## \* **Drum Circle**

Organized by our two Sheridan Project Management students, Cassandra Brisley and Sarah Louise McGregor, SERCCA hosted its first membership event on the evening of April 7th. It was attended by 20 guests, the majority of whom were SERCCA members. A few invited friends also participated in the event.



The focus of the event was a drum circle, facilitated by **Jamie Andrews**. He is an exceptional teacher with over 25 years of experience. Together we created an evening of song, learning both the art of drumming and the cultural importance that it holds in history. The evening was a great success!



## \* **The Dance Project**

Our sessions in the Toronto long-term care facility have ended and on May 17, we began our pilot dance program with individuals with dementia. More news in September.

## \* **Unleashing Creativity**

On June 4, we are co-hosting with [360° Suite Living](#), a day-long interactive workshop entitled "Future Quest 2011" where we will generate and share creative ideas on topics relevant to adults 55+.

## \* **"In the Works"**

Writing Project. Led by Sheridan professor, Joyce Wayne, this pilot will examine the relationship between writing and memory through the transformation of life memories into fiction.

Art, Visualization and You. Susan Beniston, also a Sheridan professor, will explore how different art therapy approaches foster creative self discovery and promote strengths and personal growth through image making.

# Community Profile

## The Centre for Active Aging Art Group by Marion Wilburn

### Who are we?

We are seniors (60 to 92 years of age) who deeply value the experience of sharing and supporting creative pursuits.

In 1974, the [Centre for Active Aging](#) (then known as the Mississauga Senior Citizens' Centre) located in Ontario, Canada, opened and 14 enthusiastic artists began sharing their interests and talents under the direction of [Shirley Erskine](#). In 1989, a second section was added and the group took over responsibility for hiring and paying the instructors. Talented local artists teach both traditional and innovative techniques in various styles including abstraction, using pencil, ink, pastel, water colour and acrylic.

Working from our own resource material, we paint all subject matter from still life to the human figure.

We are regularly surprised by, and admiring of, the finished works that reflect each member's unique style and personality.

To read more about the group and membership information **please visit the SERC blog at [www.agingmatters.blogspot.com](http://www.agingmatters.blogspot.com)**.

*How do 28 women and men spend their Thursday or Friday mornings from September to June?*

\*\*\*\*\*

*They chat, listen, learn, share and create art while enjoying a relaxing north light view of the Cawthra Estate woods through the windows of the centre.*



A visitor happily holds his purchase of one of Marion's paintings

*Respect for individual needs is paramount in our group. Members may use watercolour in an acrylics session or draw in a painting class.*

*'Creative enjoyment' is our raison d'être and 'supportive informality' our norm. We laugh, tell stories, listen to music, and move about praising other's efforts, encouraging each other during periods of frustration, and laughing with each other at unexpected or truly unusual outcomes.*

### What are the benefits?

The mix of creativity, learning and friendship enriches our lives, keeping us engaged and active. Many of us regularly stay after class for a light lunch in the centre's cafeteria. There we share life's joys and frustrations, tell stories from our past, discuss issues of interest, and pass around photos of our trips, pets and family. We often go on outings to art shows, movies, local events, and participate in many of the centre's other activities such as the spring picnic, the Christmas lunch, and Valentine's lunch.

### Is our work on show and available for sale?

We offer a continuously changing display of 30-40 pieces in the centre's main hall which visitors may view at their leisure.

Since 1979 we have held an annual **Art Show and Sale** offering 350+ original works in a variety of media. Artists choose which of their pieces to exhibit. We offer unframed, matted, and framed works and a large collection of original art cards.

**Click [here](#) for information about our next show!**

# Creative Arts

## **The Donald & Elaine Rafelman Creative Arts Studio at Baycrest (Toronto, Canada)**

*is motivated by one very specific goal.....  
enhancing the quality of life of the elderly.*

Thoughts of frailty, loss and pain disappear when Baycrest residents and patients enter the cheerful and inviting environs of the Creative Arts Studio. In their place are feelings of joy, energy and purpose – as residents and patients focus their attention on what they **can do**, not what they cannot do. They discover the creativity within themselves and the potential to continue learning and trying new things. The residual effects of this awakening last long after they return to their floors and units.



Over the past 10 years, the staff of the Creative Arts Studio have introduced and adapted activities to suit the abilities and interests of residents and patients. The client-centred approach is designed to ensure that every person is able to take part in an activity that gives them enjoyment and a sense of accomplishment.

***While so many of life's pleasures are no longer available to my mother, she has found new and wonderful kinds of pleasure in [the] studio.***  
— daughter of a resident

Activities in the Studio include painting, pottery, quilting, knitting, sewing, embroidery, weaving, and beading. Studio programs are facilitated by three Creative Arts specialists, with the assistance of more than 50 volunteers who rotate through the room on their assigned days and times. Summer Youth Volunteers and Special Needs Volunteers support the team throughout the year.



**The Creative Arts Studio** is involved in a number of special projects that engage the greater community - examples include *Puppets for Peace*, a knitting group that makes puppets for Israeli, Jordanian and Palestinian children undergoing treatment in hospitals; and the *Havdalah Program*, a service on select Saturday nights that brings together residents, families, and community synagogues.

**For more information,  
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# Performing Arts

## ***Breaking Down Stereotypes Through Theatre***

In 1999, [Bonnie L. Vorenberg](#) published "**Senior Theatre Connections**" the first directory "to compile information about the field of senior theatre". It contains a comprehensive list of the senior theatre groups existing at the time in North America, Australia, Europe, South America, and Africa. Although some groups are no longer operating, others have evolved into umbrella organizations with groups in more than one community. Many have an educational purpose, performing skits about aging issues to children, health care providers as well as general audiences. Others perform existing musicals and plays. In addition to listings of theatre and dance groups, the "**Senior Theatre Connections**" directory features playwrights, their scripts, and publishers for scripts and programs.

In this issue of our newsletter, we highlight two such groups, **The Older Women's Network Theatre Group** which performs in Sydney, Australia and the **STAGEBRIDGE Senior Theatre Company**, a group based in Oakland, California. The focus of the performances for both groups is to present positive images of aging.

### ***The Older Women's Network Theatre Group***

**The Older Women's Network (OWN) Theatre Group** was born in the late 1980's, shortly after [OWN](#) was founded in Australia. It all began when a small group of older women performed songs and skits outside Old Parliament House in Canberra, Australia, to protest the invisibility and silencing of older women in society.

The group participates in intergenerational activities, often performing to young audiences and sharing life stories through their scripts.

#### **The aims of the group are:**

- \* to present a positive image of aging
- \* to educate, inform and entertain
- \* to give older women the opportunity to explore their talent and participate in all aspects of theatre work
- \* to enjoy life to the fullest

[Click here](#) for more information about the group and a copy of their brochure.

Order a book on the history of The Older Women Network Theatre Group at:  
<http://www.own.org.au/downloads/CentreStageOrderForm.doc>

### ***STAGEBRIDGE Senior Theatre Company***

**STAGEBRIDGE** is the oldest senior theatre company in the United States. It began as an acting class at a senior centre. Very quickly, the participants were performing original plays at other senior centres and elementary schools.

*From their website:* "**STAGEBRIDGE** is an arts organization that uses theatre and storytelling to bridge the generation gap by breaking down stereotypes and stimulating more positive attitudes toward aging.

**STAGEBRIDGE's** intergenerational programs feature senior theatre productions, storytelling in the schools, nurses training programs, acting classes for seniors, and writing contests for children."

For more information and video clips from their performances go to:  
<http://www.stagebridge.org/>

This summer, from July 5-11, they are offering classes at their **5th Annual Performing Arts Camp**. Students (age 50+) will learn about acting, mime, storytelling, improvisation, Motown music, musical theatre and dance, and more.

# Movement Matters



## "Dancing Home to Me"

*My experience in the SERCCA dance research project  
by Jacqui Penson*

*In our last issue, Jacqui was featured on the Inspiration page. She turned our research into reality by creating a dance class in her community. In this issue, she shares her experience of what it was like to participate in our project. Below are excerpts from her story. For the complete article go to: [www.agingmatters.blogspot.com](http://www.agingmatters.blogspot.com)*

### Getting Started:

It is the tiniest of ads, tucked away in the "Community Notices" section of the paper, but it springs at me like a banner headline: "Free Dance Classes for adults 55+." Despite earnest worries about what is in store (what if the classes require spandex?) I summon the courage and call. A pleasant voice answers the phone.

Within minutes I hear myself making arrangements to participate in a dance research project with older adults through Sheridan College's Elder Research Centre (SERC). And it's pretty much come as you are – works for me!

**"The first day, I locate the studio and tentatively open the door. I am really quite anxious."**

Seeing the mirrors, the *barre*, the piano, I am transported back in time. As a child, I had fallen in love with ballet – the music and movement carried me away. Somehow when I danced, I felt safe, I felt special – I felt like 'Me.'

### The Experience:

I see individuals of every age and stage (55 plus, that is!), size and shape, clustered here and there chatting.

At first, I feel clumsy and unsure and my brain is working overtime to remember everything – but it is okay. As the class progresses, my anxiety slowly ebbs and I feel the music lift and transport me. Something deep, long-buried and forgotten is stirring....

**"We are dancing and it is joyous, freeing and just plain fun!"**

The Thursday class is more of a jazz/modern dance. Compared to ballet, this presents a challenge to move outside my 'comfort zone'. After warm-up exercises, we learn a little 'combo' to Liza Minelli's "Bye, Bye, Birdie." I don't remember ever having laughed so much in a dance class! As we 'step-ball-change' and 'sugar' our way across the floor I can feel inhibitions gradually falling away as our teacher exhorts us to "put it out there!"

### The Benefits:

**"For 60 minutes twice a week the world fades away."**

I feel stronger, balance is improving and joints that just a few short weeks ago felt like they required a shot of "WD-40," begin to loosen up.

Even more significant though, is the feeling of well-being by the end of class. We know about the benefits of exercise but this is something more than that, something almost mystical.

**"I realize that, for me, being in these classes has become an exercise in déjà vu—a reconnecting with and reclaiming of who I was—who I am."**

**Join Jacqui and the rest of the dancers "at the barre"!**  
Phone: 905-845-6079

# Inspirations

Those who inspire us to keep pushing the envelope of creative aging

***"You are never too old to set another goal or to dream a new dream"***

***C. S. Lewis***

To this quote let's add ***"or try new things!"***

We hope you enjoy this collage of adults who inspire us by embracing new activities! They give meaning to our research and we truly value their contributions.





# From Our Bookshelf

## Resources in the field of creative aging

### Articles

- \* Carr, D., Wellin, C., & Reece, H. (2009). A review of arts and aging research: Revealing an elusive but promising direction for the era of the third age. *Journal of Aging, Humanities and the Arts*, 3, 199. **This article examines arts and aging research over a 40 year period in four prominent gerontology journals.**
- \* Fisher, B.J., & Specht, D.K. (1999). Successful aging and creativity in later life. *Journal of Aging Studies*, 13, 457-472. **This study examined the meanings older people attach to successful aging and its relationship to creative activity.**
- \* Sherman, Andrea (2006). Toward a creative culture: Lifelong learning through the arts. *Generations*, 30, 42. **This article discusses the role of the arts in lifelong learning and looks at the work of several programs throughout the U.S. that incorporate the arts in learning opportunities for older adults.**

### Web resources for organizations

- \* <http://www.artsandaging.org/> This website "explains why and how older adults benefit from participating in professionally conducted community arts programs and offers detailed advice and examples on program design, implementation, and evaluation." Read about the toolkit.
- \* Centre for Elders and Youth in the Arts: <http://ceya.ioaging.org/>
- \* <http://www.cecd-society.org/> - see page 3 of their newsletter about a creativity assessment tool. (See also information on their 6th annual conference below.)
- \* <http://www.dementia-activities.com/>

### Web resources to expand your creativity

- \* <http://www.creativeaging.org/capture-your-creativity/>
- \* Julia Cameron, *The Artist's Way* <http://www.theartistsway.com/>
- \* Learn about art and history through [Roadscholar](#)

# International News

- \* Put June 17, 2011 in your calendar to attend a day talk with Norman Doidge, author of "*The Brain that Changes Itself*", in TORONTO, CANADA. This day talk is targeted to health care professionals, but is also relevant for academics, parents, caregivers and educators. [Click here for more information.](#)
- \* The **6th International** Conference on Creative Expression, Communication and Dementia is being held at the Waterfront Hotel in downtown Burlington, Ontario, Canada, **October 3 & 4, 2011**, with pre-conference workshops on **October 2, 2011**. The overall theme of the conference is **Health, Aging and the Creative Arts**. For more information, go to <http://www.cecd-society.org/>
- \* Go to <http://www.positiveaging.fielding.edu/> for information on the **5th Annual International Conference on Positive Aging** being held in Los Angeles, December 6-9, 2011.



# Creativity Café

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

*"Creativity is a type of learning process where the teacher and the pupil are located in the same individual"*

— **Arthur Koestler**

*"Art speaks when words fade"*

— **motto of the Creative Expression, Communication and Dementia Society)**

<http://www.cecd-society.org/>

*An 80-year-old woman with dementia who uses a walker and lives in a long-term care facility moves her hand to the music. A 65-year-old man waltzes once a week at the senior centre. They are both dancing.*

— **The Arts and Aging Toolkit**  
<http://artsandaging.org/>

*"Most of us have no idea of our real creative height. We are much more gifted than we know."*

— **Julia Cameron**

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

<http://serc.sheridaninstitute.ca>

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