

THE IMPACT OF ARTS AND CULTURE

AGENDA:

AGING

SUMMARY

Culture is key to keeping people engaged and inspired through the entire journey of life.

For adults over 50, arts and culture can dramatically reduce the risk of developing depression, decrease the possibility of dementia through volunteer engagement and improve mental and emotional processing power.

The Agenda series highlights existing research and resources that demonstrate the relevance and impact of arts and culture in Greater Philadelphia, throughout the Commonwealth and across the country.



*Photograph courtesy of
Brandywine River Museum of Art*



IMPACT: REDUCING DEPRESSION

A recent major study shows the impact of arts and culture engagement on older adults: in the more than 2,100 participants 50 years and older, monthly engagement in cultural experiences—including theater, opera, art galleries, cinema, exhibitions, museums and concerts—reduces the risk of developing depression by a staggering 48%. Even less regular attendance, every few months, lowers the risk of depression by 32%.¹

The emotional response to cultural activities such as music involves brain regions critical to the processing of positive emotions and reward.² Cultural activities also require cognitive and perceptual engagement associated with lower levels of depression,³ and cultural engagement has been found to support coping behaviors in the face of physical health challenges.⁴

Regularly engaging
with arts and culture
**reduces risk of
depression by**

48%
in older adults

1 Fancourt, D., Tymoszuk, U., *Cultural Engagement and Incident Depression in Older Adults: Evidence from the English Longitudinal Study of Aging*.

2 Koelsch, S., *Toward a Neural Basis of Music Perception – a Review and Updated Model*.

3 Camic, P.M., Chatterjee, H.J., *Museums and Art Galleries as Partners for Public Health Interventions*.

4 Hutchinson, S.L., et al., *Leisure as a Coping Resource: Variations in Coping with Traumatic Injury and Illness*.

Photograph courtesy of the Museum of the American Revolution



IMPACT: ENGAGING MENTALLY & SOCIALLY

The Brandywine River Museum of Art's workforce of more than **300 volunteers** not only contributes to the work of the organization; it also gives seniors routine, regular social connection and physical activity. The community benefits from the impact of seniors who are economically more active as a result of their volunteer engagement.

Recent studies show that for adults over 65, active volunteer work combines clear structure, collective purpose and increases in cognitive, social and physical activity that improves brain function and reduces the risk of dementia. **Seniors who volunteer continuously (once a month or more) are significantly less likely to need anti-dementia treatment and have fewer cognitive complaints** than seniors who volunteer occasionally or do not volunteer their time at all.¹

Regular volunteer work – like that done in gardens, museums and other arts and culture organizations – makes older adults nearly 2.5 times less likely to experience dementia.

¹ Griep Y., *Can Volunteering in Later Life Reduce the Risk of Dementia? A 5-Year Longitudinal Study Among Volunteering and Non-Volunteering Retired Seniors.*



IMPACT: TRAINING THE MIND

The Curtis Institute of Music's Creative Expression Through Music program, offered with the Penn Memory Center, gives seniors with Alzheimer's disease a weekly opportunity to make and share music and tell stories in a safe space, helping 50+ seniors and family members feel "happier, lighter and more at-ease" since the program's inception. The curriculum is designed to allow participants to process negative emotions and increase and embrace positive emotions through music creation, community-building exercises and informal interactions with professional musicians and fellow patients.

A 2019 study on the impact of art training on older adults shows a direct connection between consistent music training and the ability to modulate emotions like those experienced by the Penn Memory Center participants.

Music and visual art training leads to dynamic improvements in neuroplasticity among seniors, helping maintain positive emotional and behavioral responses twice as long as traditional cognitive therapy.¹

RESEARCH

ART MAKES THE DIFFERENCE:

As we age, we benefit from engaging in artistic activity across the creative spectrum.

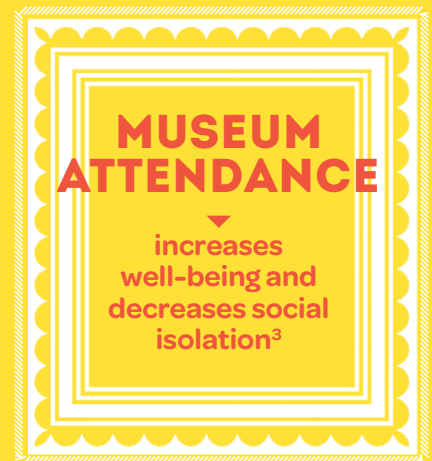


DANCING

reduces fall risks, strengthens muscles and improves mobility¹

POTTERY & JEWELRY MAKING

sharpen mental acuity and maintain manual flexibility²



MUSEUM ATTENDANCE

increases well-being and decreases social isolation³

GARDENING & HORTICULTURE

reduce stress and encourage healthier eating⁴



CHORAL SINGING

reduces loneliness, anxiety and depression⁵

POETRY

improves vocabulary and word usage among adults with dementia⁶

MORE INFORMATION, CITATIONS + RESOURCES ► [PHILACULTURE.ORG/AGING](https://philaculture.org/aging)

¹ Gratton, L. & Scott, A., *The 100 Year Life*.

² Fancourt, D., Tymoszuk, U., *Cultural Engagement and Incident Depression in Older Adults: Evidence from the English Longitudinal Study of Aging*.

³ Chatterjee, H., et al., *Museopathy: Exploring the Healing Potential of Handling Museum Objects*.

⁴ Buck, D., *Gardens and Health: Implications for Policy and Practice*.

⁵ Daykin, N., et al., *Music, Singing and Wellbeing in Healthy Adults*.

⁶ Coles, P., *The Manchester Hospital Arts Project*.

AGENDA BY THE NUMBERS

**10,000 AMERICANS
TURN 65 EVERY DAY**

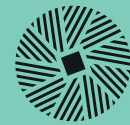
**WOMEN 85 YEARS OF AGE
AND OLDER ARE THE FASTEST
GROWING AGE GROUP
IN THE UNITED STATES**

**HALF OF THE PEOPLE
BORN TODAY CAN EXPECT
TO LIVE TO 100 YEARS OLD**

**ADULTS OVER 50 MAKE UP
MORE THAN 61% OF
RECENT ELECTION TURNOUT**

**PENNSYLVANIA HAS THE
2ND HIGHEST PERCENTAGE
OF SENIORS AT 16%**

PROJECT PARTNERS



**BRANDYWINE
CONSERVANCY &
MUSEUM OF ART**



FLEISHER

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BEST PRACTICES FOR SERVING OLDER AUDIENCES

- Clearly communicate in the present about what is happening in the present
- Document everything
- Partner with known senior-serving entities in comfortable spaces
- Engage caregivers
- Remind yourself and them that elders matter and that culture needs them to survive
- Give more time to work, talk and transition between activities
- Connect older people's stories with young people
- Focus on being flexible and adaptable
- Don't treat seniors as students—treat them as elders
- Show their work in context
- Expect cliques to form, but facilitate social engagement

Cultural Alliance member organizations providing aging-related programming

11th Hour Theatre Company	College of Physicians of Philadelphia	Media Arts Council	Represented Theatre Company Rep Radio
The Academy of Natural Sciences of Drexel University	CultureTrust Greater Philadelphia	Miller Center for the Arts	The Road Company Theater Group
African American Museum in Philadelphia	Ebenezer Maxwell Mansion	Mt. Cuba Center	The Rosenbach
American Public Gardens Association	The Franklin Institute	Multicultural Arts Exchange	Scott Arboretum of Swarthmore College
American Swedish Historical Museum	FringeArts	Mural Arts Philadelphia	Smith Memorial Playground and Playhouse
Anne-Marie Mulgrew & Dancers Company	Hidden City Philadelphia	National Museum of American Jewish History	South Jersey Cultural Alliance
Ars Nova Workshop	The Idiopathic Ridiculopathy Consortium	Opera Philadelphia	Taller Puertorriqueño, Inc.
Art-Reach	Independence Seaport Museum	Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts	TEDxPhiladelphia
Arthur Ross Gallery	InLiquid	The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society	Theatre Horizon
Arts Guild at Neumann University	James A. Michener Art Museum	People's Light	Theatre Philadelphia
Bristol Riverside Theatre	Jazz Bridge	Philadelphia Museum of Art	Tiny Dynamite
Broad Street Review	John Bartram Association	The Philadelphia Orchestra Association	Tongue & Groove Spontaneous Theater
Casa de Duende	Kelly Music for Life, Inc.	Philadelphia Sculptors	Twenty-Two Gallery
Christ Church Preservation Trust	Kulu Mele African Dance & Drum Ensemble	Philadelphia Society for the Preservation of Landmarks	Wagner Free Institute of Science
The Clay Studio	Lansdowne Arts Festival	Philadelphia's Magic Gardens	The Wilma Theater
	Longwood Gardens	Philly Improv Theater	Woodmere Art Museum
		PlayArts	

**As of the 2018 Social Impact Census*

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Center for Advocacy for the Rights & Interests of the Elderly

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CIVIC PARTNER

 Mayor's Commission on Aging

The Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance would like to thank its project partners and advisory committee members, including: Yocasta Lora, AARP; Diane Menio, Center for Advocacy for the Rights and Interests of the Elderly; Lydia Hernandez-Velez, Mayor's Commission on Aging; Najja Orr and Joan Zaremba, Philadelphia Corporation for Aging. The Cultural Alliance also thanks Willo Carey and Peter Benliel for their valuable insight and support.

Photograph courtesy of the Museum of the American Revolution

FRONT PANEL: Photograph by Dominic Mercier, courtesy of Fleisher Art Memorial