



Creative Aging in Action

Expanding Library Impact for Older Adults





About Lifetime Arts

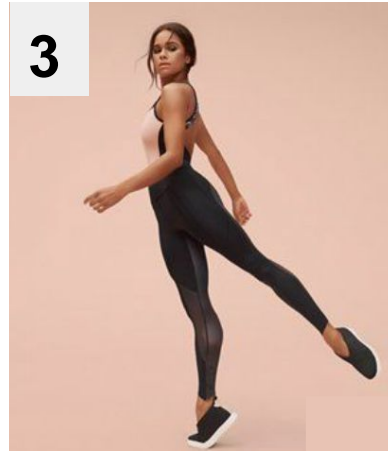
FOUNDED IN 2008



We work to build a world without ageism and social isolation by collaboratively weaving creative aging into the fabric of our communities.



Which one of Misty Copeland's poses represents how you feel right now and why?



Imagine

What art form do you want to learn?

When was the moment you first discovered this art form?

What is Creative Aging?

It's the practice of intentional artistic and creative engagement throughout our lives to support our health, connection, and purpose as we age.





Creativity is lifelong and older adults are essential cultural contributors across all art forms, skill levels, and communities.



What are the Arts?

WHAT ARE THE ARTS?

This may seem like a silly question, but it's important to clarify that when we talk about the arts in relationship to creative aging, we are using the widest possible definition of art.

-  **Visual Arts**, such as painting, photography, sculpture, street art, textiles, and woodwork.
-  **Performing Arts**, such as music, dance, film, singing, spoken word, and theatre.
-  **Literary Arts**, such as creative writing, poetry, storytelling, and memoir writing.
-  **Digital and Electronic Arts**, such as animations, podcasting, and computer graphics.



Core Elements of Creative Aging

- Art-Making & Learning!
- Making New Friends!
- Responding and Sharing!



Where Creative Aging is Happening



Direct Local Programming



- Community + faith-based centers
- Independent + assisted living
- Intergenerational collectives
- Libraries
- Museums
- Universities
- and more!

Infrastructure + Policy Support



- Coalitions + information hubs on local arts engagement
- Health systems + insurance companies via “arts on prescription” programs
- State-based cultural agencies nurturing programs in rural + urban localities
- Four state aging plans!

Creative Aging: What Does the Research Show?

Studies have found that regular participation in arts activities can make a real and meaningful difference in the lives of older adults:



Less Loneliness

Older adults who participate in arts activities report feeling more connected to others and less isolated.



Better Mood

Participation in arts programs is linked to reduced symptoms of depression and improved overall well-being.



Sharper Mind

Creative activities support cognitive health and may help slow memory decline in aging.



Fewer Hospitalizations & More Proactive Health Visits

Arts participation may lead to lower use of medication and fewer hospitalizations –and promote routine health and dental visits



Skill-Building & *Social Engagement*

Older adults can **learn something new**—or more in-depth—and **make friends** in the process.



→ Mental Health

Older adults were **20% less likely to be depressed** if they engaged in creative activities each month (Bone, J.K., et al, *Health and Retirement Study*, 2022)

→ Physical Health

Older adults who engage in cultural activities every few months or more had a **reduced risk of becoming frail and a slower progression of frailty over time** (Fancourt, D., *Cultural Engagement is a Risk Reducing Factor for Frailty Incidence and Progression*, 2019)

→ Cognitive Function

Engaging in arts activities—for **1–3 hours per week**—is linked to **stronger executive functioning, language and verbal abilities, and memory** years later. (Bone, J.K, et al. *Participatory and Receptive Arts Engagement in Older Adults*, 2023)

The More You Participate, the Greater the Benefits

Older adults were **more likely to experience healthy aging** if they participated in arts activities **once a month or more** (80% unadjusted) (Bone, J.K., et al, *Health and Retirement Study*, 2022)





Creative Aging in Community

- Adaptable
- Responsive
- Open to all older adults in the community
- Centers older adults' voices & leadership





An Aging Nation

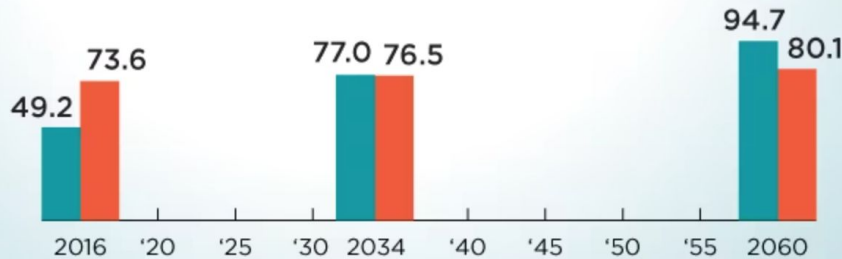
Projected Number of Children
and Older Adults

For the First Time in U.S. History Older Adults Are
Projected to Outnumber Children by 2034

Projected
percentage
of population



Projected
number
(millions)

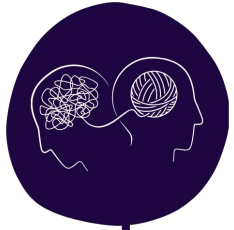


Note: 2016 data are estimates not projections.

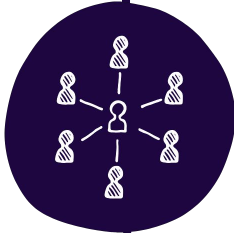
Why is
Everybody
Talking About
Aging?



Three Trending Issues in Healthy Aging with Links to Creative Aging



Brain Health: *Creative learning and expression stimulates cognitive function, memory, and neuroplasticity*



Social Connectedness: *Arts engagement builds community, reduces loneliness, and strengthens resilience*



Livable Communities: *Programs promote local inclusion, intergenerational exchange, and neighborhood vitality*



Why libraries are ideal spaces for creative aging

- Open to all
- Rural, suburban, urban
- Attract older adults and foster intergenerational connection
- Centers for learning in the community



Why it's important to your mission

- Older adults often became a kind of “invisible” audience
- Many of our small towns are aging in place.
- We needed new strategies to serve older adults not just as service recipients, but as active, creative contributors.



Quick Note on Funding

Creative aging sits at the intersection of arts, aging, and community health—opening doors to diverse funding sources:

- Library Friends groups
- Local/state arts councils
- Community foundations
- Corporate sponsors
- National funders (NEA, AARP Foundation)

Joint applications with partners can strengthen grant proposals, demonstrating a commitment to the work and signaling future sustainability.



Advancing Creative Aging Through State Library Leadership



Advancing Creative Aging Through State Library Leadership

Overview

- Collaboration with MO and WY State Libraries
- Training for local libraries
- Seed funds to pilot programs
- Documentation and evaluation
- National dissemination
- Professional development through InfoPeople



Advancing Creative Aging Through State Library Leadership *Accomplishments*

- **200** library workers trained
- **786** library workers attended webinars
- **\$113,000** regranted to public libraries
- **61** programs supported in **21** public libraries
- **732** of older adults served



THE LIBRARY CENTER



Program Elements

- Flexible framework
- Taught by a practicing teaching artist
- Skill-building *and* social engagement
- Planned Culminating Event
- Students self-select and register
- Accessible and responsive



Advancing Creative Aging Through State Library Leadership

Impacts on Older Adults

- 90% Improved creative expression
- 74% Increased confidence in creating art
- 70% Increased mental engagement
- 69% Increased interest in learning more about other art forms
- 66% Encouraged me to participate in other community activities
- 64% Formed new/stronger relationships

Source: Touchstone Center for Collaborative Inquiry



Advancing Creative Aging Through State Library Leadership

Impacts on Libraries

- **Bring in new patrons & re-engage familiar faces**
- **Turn participants into library champions.** Many go on to volunteer, lead peer programs, or support fundraising—deepening their investment in the library's role as a community hub.
- **Spark innovation in library practice**



Advancing Creative Aging Through State Library Leadership

Takeaways

- **Build institutional capacity by engaging multiple staff** members in creative aging leadership and implementation.
- ◆ Libraries in Missouri and Wyoming successfully used **team-based approaches that distributed program coordination** and branch-level support responsibilities.
- ◆ Creative aging programs depend on **intentional design, planning, and alignment with local calendars.**



Advancing Creative Aging Through State Library Leadership

Takeaways

- **Expand partnerships between state libraries and other state agencies** to increase access and investment
- ◆ Example includes collaboration among the Wyoming State Library, Wyoming Arts Council, and Wyoming Department of Health Aging Division



Advancing Creative Aging Through State Library Leadership

Takeaways

- **Leverage complementary strengths** of national intermediaries, state libraries, library systems, and local coordinators to strengthen creative aging infrastructure and leadership.
 - Having the **support and leadership from state level agencies encouraged participation from local libraries.**
 - This aspect of the project was critical, as local libraries are often hesitant to adopt new practices that require additional capacity.



Advancing Creative Aging Through State Library Leadership

Takeaways

- **Leverage creative aging as a positive message**, positioning libraries as cultural engagement leaders in the community
- ◆ **Continue coaching library staff to use culminating events strategically to increase visibility**, strengthen partnerships, and demonstrate benefits of creative aging programs
- ◆ **Support library workers in sharing their creative aging experiences** to cultivate additional champions for the field.



Creative Aging in the West & Roadmap to Better Health

Includes multi-sector state teams in CO, UT, WY, NV, MT, and ID, including their state libraries in most states

Photography by Carol Greet, program participant, Washakie County Library, WY



NEW POLICY BRIEF!

Creative Aging in the Healthy Aging Ecosystem

- **Elevate awareness** of creative aging and its linkage to healthy aging.
- **Embed** creative aging **in state and federal policies** centered on healthy aging.
- **Accelerate diffusion and investment** of creative aging, particularly **in the private sector**.



Creative Aging in Libraries
<https://libraries.lifetimearts.org/>

TAKE ACTION

Turn Your Library Into a Hub of Creativity

1

Discover What's Possible

Learn how Creative Aging transforms lives through research and proven practices.

2

Be Inspired by Success

See real library programs making an impact in communities like yours.

3

Bring It to Life

Access tools and resources to launch Creative Aging at your library.

Deepen Your Creative Aging Practice!

Explore the Library Website

Explore everything you need to plan, run, and sustain creative aging programs that matter.



Access Our New Policy Brief!

This national policy brief equips decision-makers with evidence for arts-centered healthy aging, social connection, and livable communities.



What's Up Next?

Register for "Practical
Strategies to Build Support
for Creative Aging" Seminar



*Wednesday, June 10th
1pm-2pm EST*



Creative Aging = Healthy Aging



*“There is no denying the problems that accompany aging. But what has been universally denied is the potential. **The ultimate expression of potential is creativity.**”*

Dr. Gene Cohen

The Creative Age: Awakening Human Potential

