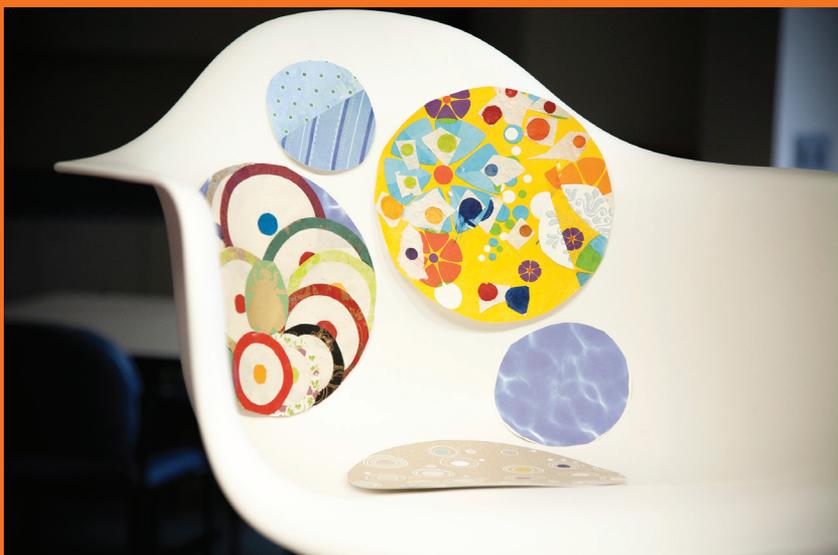


# What We Saw Today

SELECTED WORKS FROM ARTS FOR THE AGING





Under the guidance of AFTA Teaching Artist Carol Siegel, participants at Iona Adult Day Health, Wellness & Arts Center in Washington, D.C. re-designed a modern classic chair donated by Herman Miller and American Office. They named it “Moon Watcher”.

Cover and inside page: photos by Gene Carl Feldman and Emily Wathen

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## INTRODUCTION

Through the generosity of friends who made gifts during the 2013 Power2Give campaign, Arts for the Aging (AFTA) presents this publication, proudly making visible the original works of seniors who more and more are becoming invisible to much of the community. AFTA focuses most of its free arts engagements on older adults who are vulnerable and frail and who attend underserved senior care centers throughout the Washington D.C. metropolitan area. Workshops are led by a dedicated faculty of teaching artists trained in AFTA's nationally-recognized best practices. Arts for the Aging's mission combats isolation and spreads joy to seniors who need it most.

Wonderful things happen during programs. Unless you have a loved one attending a senior center where these workshops take place, you might never see or hear the inspirational voices that so many older adults still have. The artwork, poetry and personal stories shared here bring the Arts for the Aging experience directly to you.

Now AFTA's seniors will feel the rush of seeing their photographs, words and original art on a printed page — a delight to share with family and friends.

This publication is dedicated to the older adults who participate in Arts for the Aging's programs.

Additional appreciation goes to AFTA founder Lolo Sarnoff, whose vision is an inspiration to all!



“It reminds me of a time when days were used.”

— *Moving Art* Participant. Photo by Stephanie Williams.



“You make me so happy. I hope you always come visit us.”

— Participant in *Songs of Our Lives* with Teaching Artist Anthony Hyatt.  
Photo by Gene Carl Feldman.

## WHAT WE SAW TODAY

What I saw today?

You

I saw you

I saw me in thee

How can that be

All in one day?

I know not

But I listen

I look and then I see

An empty vacuous shell?

Or rather all the great details of delight

We've maintained and glean from

A sparkle in the eye

Flowers arranged

Raising our children

Giving life and blood to country

Helping us all survive

And wish for sleep

To celebrate life's long end

To not know

But to listen

Where did time go?



— Kensington Park Senior Living and AFTA Teaching Artist Annetta  
Dexter-Sawyer. Photo courtesy Kensington Park Senior Living.

## MOVING ART

Where do dance and visual art intersect?

AFTA Teaching Artists Nancy Havlik and Donna McKee explore this question in their program *Moving Art*. Participants examine the work of 20th century artists through movement and original art-making. The following images and testimonials are from workshops at East County Community Center in Silver Spring, MD.

“Nancy and I realized how much modern art and modern dance have in common. Throughout the 20th century visual artists often focused on ideas about movement, including the process of mark-making and gesture as a powerful form of human expression. In *Moving Art*, we introduced the work of several artists who were masters of Modernism in Europe and America, including Kandinsky, Paul Klee, Stuart Davis and Jackson Pollock. Each of these artists, along with the dance sessions we held, served as inspiration for art-making. As we explored techniques such as collage, charcoal drawing and painting, participants commented on how abstract lines, shapes, and colors can suggest aspects of our shared human experience even though they are not traditional, realistic pictures. A sweeping gesture of the hand holding a piece of charcoal became a line that reminded us of wind and storms. A rhythmic pattern of geometric shapes in a collage took on new meaning when we added fragments of sheet music and harmonies of color.”

— Teaching Artist Donna McKee



“Each piece of art is unique, like a fingerprint.”

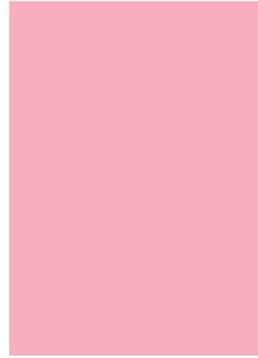


“My twin brother is an artist. Maybe I’m an artist too.”



“If we make a collage with our bodies, we are the paper!”

Photos by Stephanie Williams



“The collages were about layering of forms. Layering also happens in dance. One dancer is close to another in space and as they each move they make a three dimensional moving image that helps shape the dance and the choreography.”

— Teaching Artist Nancy Havlik. Photo by Stephanie Williams



“It reminds me of going through the forest and encountering obstacles along the way – the darker marks represented the obstacles. I used to work in a forest and mostly I had to stay on the path, but sometimes I would venture off and encounter such obstacles. This isn’t meant to be sad, but hopeful. Barriers are a necessary part of life.”

— Rigmor, Program Participant

## GIVING VOICE TO MEMORY

Honoring the celebration of Women's History Month at Long Branch Senior Center in Silver Spring, MD, Teaching Artist Candace Wolf holds a series of storytelling workshops. *Giving Voice to Memory* explores personal identity and the impact and potential of women throughout time. Conversations are recorded and create a long-form poem, which is then performed for the community center at a culminating event.

When asked what she learned from the experience, one participant said, "I learned that we are all the same. You look around and you don't know this...we are from different countries but we share the same experiences, many of us coming to this country from somewhere else and having to raise our children."

## WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A WOMAN

Being a woman means to believe that you can do anything you set your mind to.

Being a woman means that you help populate the world.

Being a woman means striking out on your own and saying, "I think I can do that!"

Being a woman means having strength for activity and for life.

Being a woman means to be esteemed and loved.

Being a woman means having a strong work ethic.

Being a woman means making sure dinner on Sunday is worth dying for! Then you can relax before you have to go back to work on Monday.

Being a woman means you have to take the right to vote very seriously.

Being a woman means having a good history book that bears witness to the truth of what really happened in our past, so no one can lie to us about our history.

Being a woman means to care for the children and teach them to read. We do the housework and scrub the floor. A woman's pots and pans are always clean and shining.

Being a woman means to *give* and to *share*. Even if you just have a little, you share the little you have. Being a woman means sharing with the child—not only the material things—but what you have in the heart.

Being a woman means that your labor should never be degraded. Being a woman means all your work should have dignity. My grandmother carried milk cans on top of her head and walked the streets selling milk. She did all sorts of things to make a living. I did domestic work. I did it with pride. I raised children. We women are actually pretty powerful.

Being a woman means there is no shame in any job, as long as you're making an honest living, and as long as you love what you do. Being a woman means getting up early in the morning and going to work every single day, Monday to Saturday, until you retire. Being a woman means you never get tired!

Being a woman means watching the changes of women in your own family, from generation to generation. My grandmother was a seamstress. She made beautiful gowns and fancy tablecloths. My mother was an elevator operator. She drove the elevators up and down. She did it with pride. I loved books since my childhood, and I went on to get a scholarship and go to college.

Being a woman means you should be a beacon and a light to the generation coming along after you.



Photos by Stephanie Williams

## WEAVING OUR STORIES

AFTA's summer intergenerational program *Weaving Our Stories* finds Teaching Artists Marcie Wolf-Hubbard (visual art) and Candace Wolf (storytelling) leading sessions with older adults and children aged 7-15 at Holly Hall Apartments in Silver Spring, MD. Holly Hall provides subsidized housing for older adults, and the youth joined in from a nearby family facility where they are part of a group called Magruder's Discovery.

At the beginning of each session, participants spend time getting to know one another. Discussion topics include things that are worth waiting for, the history behind a name, what we like best about our age, what courage means, times of change and how we cope, and the special, most unforgettable days of our lives. The discussion flows into art-making. Participants create colorful nametags for one another, illustrate stories from each others' lives and make collage portraits of their intergenerational partner. The series culminates with a celebration and exhibition in Holly Hall's common area, brightening the spirits of all who pass through.

Photos by AFTA



Photos below by Stephanie Williams



# BLOOM!

At Kensington Park Senior Living in Maryland, two groups met weekly with Teaching Artist Annetta Dexter Sawyer to explore the concept of blooming into the warm summer months. They “tended their garden” with poetry, movement, art-making and a touch of theatrical improvisation. When their buds had fully blossomed they celebrated with family and friends at a garden party and exhibition of the works they had made and a performance of dance and spoken word.





# BETWEEN NATURE AND OURSELVES

*By Participants at Kensington Park with AFTA Teaching Artist  
Annetta Dexter Sawyer*

Who are we?

We are Beings  
Certainly less than Nature

We sit here on this blue orb  
Hurling through space

In this paradise  
Witness to Nature as it unfolds

Beauty and bounty

Yet uncertain are we when what will  
Happen – not just in your or my future –

How will we live?

We will go hand-in-hand

We will co-exist

As we look for something to connect with

Sky

High

Low

All around

Our common denominator

Maybe there we have found the very place

the space –

in between

miracle

ordinary

common

Can it be one and the same born of

The Creator?

Our hearts

that common core

is truth

Nature and Ourselves



Participant in Art for Everyone at Greenbelt Adult Day Care Center

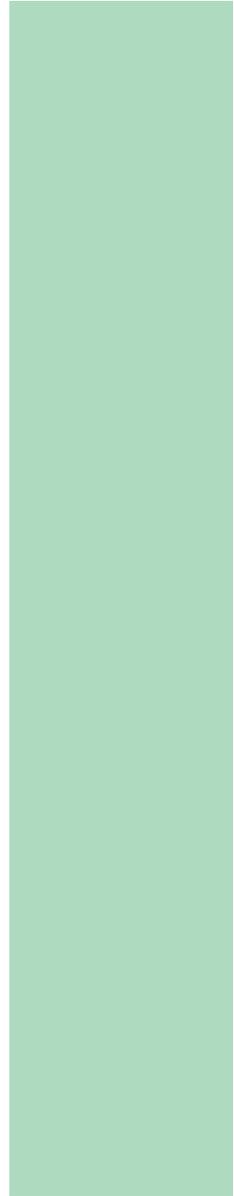
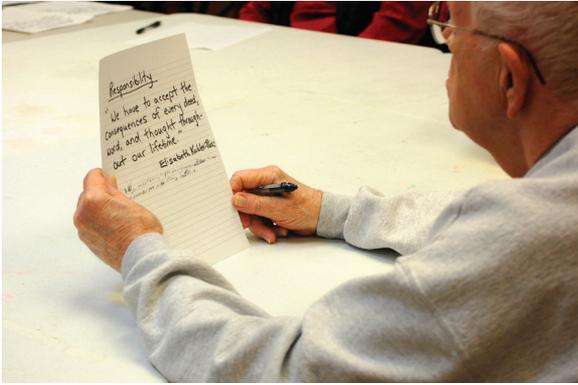
## CIRCLE OF THOUGHTS

“A circle of thoughts is encompassing, similar to a comforting embrace. Please join us at our table and bring your ideas. We welcome and value your participation. Buckle your seat belts!”

— Creative Writing Group at Lewinsville ADHCC

For six years, seniors at Lewinsville Adult Day Health Care Center (ADHCC) in McLean, VA, have gathered together with Teaching Artist Joan Hampton Fraser to share their hopes, dreams and memories – and more than a few chuckles. Their Activity Coordinator, Mariellen Combs, has kept an archive of each writer's work. When they move on to new circles, or when in some cases their life journeys come to an end, the precious gift of their writings is shared with their families. The group spent the better part of two months carefully compiling years of their original works for this publication. They created original poetry by combining the words of their members, both past and present.





## I AM NOT ORDINARY

I am inspired by others to do more with my life.

Everyone is perfectly ordinary in their own way.

The people in life that do the most “ordinary” things are often very extraordinary.

I appreciate others’ unique qualities.

I like to be with my best friend.

I care about family, health, and welfare.

I am part of a lovely group of people.

I am not ordinary.

SO STICK TO THE FIGHT WHEN YOU ARE HARDEST HIT — IT’S WHEN THINGS SEEM WORST THAT YOU MUSTN’T QUIT.

When things seem hard and light is far, I keep trying to get to the light

You never know how close you are. Don’t stop. Keep trying.

There is reward in trying

Never give up!

I’ve had both good and bad times in my life but now

I’m doing fine in my old age.

Take one day at a time and enjoy it.

Tomorrow will shine if you abide.

Don't quit. As we get older life presents more challenges —  
just keep trying.

TO HOLD THE PRESENT CLOSE, NOT  
QUESTIONING HERE AFTER, TO THRILL  
WITH ALL THE SWEETS OF LIFE — IS  
LIVING.

The sweetness in my life right now is the support of my family.

There are many trials and tribulations, much loss (of people and  
functioning as we grow older).

Life's challenges make it difficult sometimes to feel this positive.  
My family is growing older and starting to question the hereafter.

My best years are behind me because of health.

I try to look at the world in a positive light.

The people that I have touched in life and who have touched  
my life —

the sweets of life.

Life is living, sharing, loving.

To get the most out of each day and be thankful.

I care for each of you. I will care for each of you till the end of time.

## MAKING ART WITH MOZART

Participants in Teaching Artist Carol Siegel's Expressive Art program at Alexandria Adult Day Services Center in Virginia explore the connection between music and visual art.

Listening to Mozart's Variations on "Ah vous dirai-je, Maman" (K. 265 / K. 300e), or as it is better known, *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star*, each week they worked on a variation of an artistic theme; for example, line. Their pieces include language that is used in music description and abstract paintings that reflected one of the movements.



Piano students from Episcopal High School in Virginia collaborated with AFTA on the project. They were studying Mozart variations in their lessons with music instructor Elizabeth Lane. When the groups came together the student pianists each performed a movement. They guessed which painting was inspired by their movement, and in many cases they were correct! Two students composed their own original variations on Mozart's theme, and the group brainstormed names for their pieces.

Everyone agreed that the names of the paintings, when read together, created a poem.

This is my music —

Catching notes at the end of a rainbow.

Music frames the land of God.

Footsteps of the ballerina,

Gliding over the sunrise,

Winding through the forest.

The fife players.

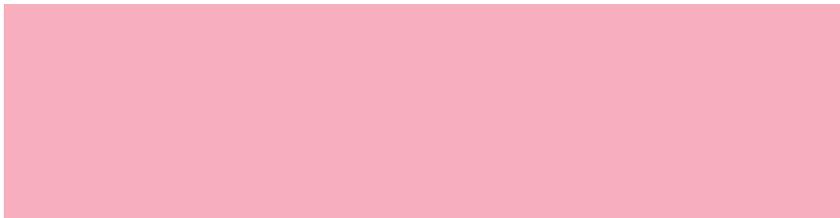
Our senior participants commented on the experience.

“I was living with my own self as I was listening to the music” — Sydney

“I felt peaceful painting to the music” — Ivah

“I felt like I was gliding to the music.” — Gloria

“My hands and arms moved to the music with a paint brush in my hand.” — Teresa





# ART FROM THE HEART: REFLECTIONS OF WHO WE ARE

The participants at Kensington Club @ Parklawn know what they like – and it’s art! After their first year of workshops with AFTA, an exhibition of their many creations was the perfect conclusion and graced the halls of their center in Rockville, MD, for three months. Friends and family gathered for an opening reception and were delighted to learn about the “inner-artist” many didn’t know their loved ones had.



Bernadette Crehan with her husband Don



Dr. Allen with her charcoal abstract.

## THE LIFE FLOWER

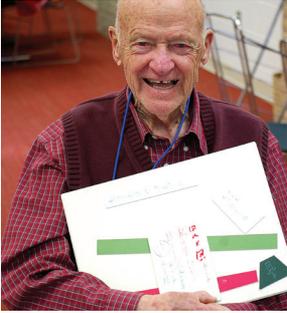
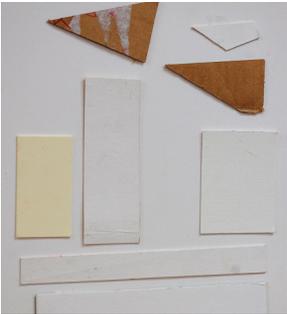
I looked around  
Then knew I had found  
A lovely bloom  
To enhance my room

The petals were nice  
But came at a price  
Their beauty was stunning  
But only lasted a morning.

— Lelia Allen, Ed.D., Ph.D.

The Kensington Club has a special connection with AFTA Teaching Artist Marcie Wolf Hubbard. Marcie's creative projects have inspired some remarkable pieces of art. Here are some favorites.

## GEOMETRIC COLLAGE



# POSTCARD EXTRAPOLATIONS



# ART IN A BOX



# FALL PHOTO COLLAGE



## ABOUT AFTA

Arts for the Aging is the only organization serving Greater Washington with a mission solely dedicated to delivering multidisciplinary, artist-led engagement programs for frail and underserved elders and the care centers they attend. Our signature program, *Joy in Generation*, embodies the AFTA mission.

When AFTA was founded in 1988 by the now nonagenarian Lolo Sarnoff, our arts interventions — aimed at physically and cognitively impaired communities of seniors — were most unique. Now we are at the forefront of a burgeoning creative aging field, reaching individuals who are otherwise unable to attend public programs offered by other arts and social service groups and allowing seniors to age in place longer despite growing impairments and accessibility needs. Our structured and meaningful arts engagements enable senior center staff to focus on their priorities areas: delivering safety net services, activities of daily living and occupational and physical therapies. With AFTA as a reliable resource for high-quality arts interventions, ours is a cost-effective programming innovation that minimizes strains on health and economic resources, and maximizes well-being and productivity of older adults.

Workshops consist of curricula with visual, musical, performing, literary, multidisciplinary and intergenerational arts experiences:

Healing Movement, Drawing & Painting, Music, Art History, Creative Writing, Storytelling, Expressive Arts, Poetry, Dance & Movement and Musical Theatre.

Our Teaching Artists employ their own specialties to encourage both individual and group pursuits, customizing their classes to accommodate the varying impairments, backgrounds and interests

of those in attendance. Workshops follow our curriculum, but in the end they are as diverse as the people who attend them, emphasizing physical and cognitive abilities, honoring changing needs, validating potential, integrating cultural richness, and igniting socialization, all so vital to creating community and feelings of belonging.

For more information visit our website [www.aftaarts.org](http://www.aftaarts.org)



Arts for the Aging  
12320 Parklawn Drive  
Rockville, MD 20852  
Phone: (301) 255-0103

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





*Dance and Blues* with Teaching Artists Miles Spicer and Nancy Havlik. Photo by Stephanie Williams

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Co-OPERAtion with Teaching Artist Peter Burroughs.  
Photo by Stephanie Williams



Combating isolation and spreading joy  
through arts engagement for seniors



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