

## Establishing a Northeast Ohio Center for Creative Aging

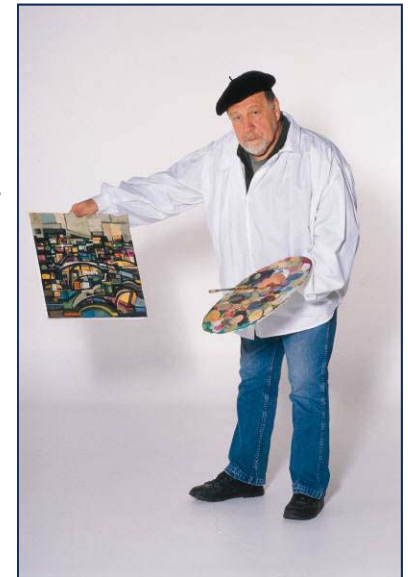
*One year planning period (11/2007 - 10/2008) with funding from the Cleveland Foundation*

There is growing evidence that creative expression has positive effects on health and quality of life. Older adults have a rich array of life experiences and cultural backgrounds from which they draw when engaging in creative and performing arts programs. Through their participation in arts programs, they help to create a living legacy for their community.

The new Northeast Ohio Center for Creative Aging will make opportunities for creative expression more widely available to older adults of all cultures and ethnic backgrounds, regardless of their economic status, age, health, and functioning. To achieve this goal, the Center will be established as part of the Benjamin Rose Institute (BRI). Its sponsorship is consistent with BRI's mission to improve the quality of life for older adults and it will expand BRI's programs to make creative arts activities more widely available to those it serves.

The Center will be designed as a regional resource for both aging and arts organizations. In addition, resource materials and technical support will be available through the Center to produce and evaluate creative arts programs. It will be one of 14 such centers around the U.S., the only one in Ohio, and an affiliate of the National Center for Creative Aging (NCCA) in Washington, D.C.

The project's Steering Committee includes more than 20 representatives from local aging and arts organizations. Project staff includes BRI staff and consultants from Cleveland State University (CSU), Fairhill Center, the Cleveland Cultural Collaborative, and Western Reserve Historical Society. Together, they will: 1) develop and evaluate two new creative aging programs; 2) acquire evidence about the benefits of participation for health and well-being; 3) offer a continuing education series on creativity, health, and aging for practitioners in aging and professionals and students in the arts; and 4) design a website for the Center, linked to the NCCA's website, that includes a calendar of events, resources for creative and performing arts programs, and information on their benefits. Lastly, BRI practice staff will develop a training program and materials for engaging homebound older adults in creative arts activities.



The project's immediate goal is to establish the Northeast Ohio Center for Creative Aging in the planning year. As part of the planning activity, it will address longer term goals such as the development of a sustainability plan and an evaluation strategy for all creative and performing arts programs sponsored by the Center. The evaluation results will add to the evidence about the benefits of participation for older adults' health and well-being.

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