

The creative age:

How museums and arts organizations are inspiring creativity, connection, and engagement for an aging community

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05/11/2019



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BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS FOR OLDER ADULT BEHAVIORAL HEALTH



I'm not a museum professional

- Education in music therapy, recreation therapy, dementia, gerontology, human service
- Aging Services university instructor
- Early stage program coordinator at the Alzheimer's Association of Colorado
- Launched Colorado's SPARK – training and program support for museums, art centers, performing arts groups, nature centers, and other cultural organizations
- Contributor, creative content for ActivityConnection.com
- Recreation and Creative Engagement Memdirector
- Family member
- Older Adult Behavioral Health Specialist in Washington County



OABHI Mission

To identify gaps, strengthen existing services, expand the skills of the workforce, and expand the development of behavioral health services and supports to improve the lives of adults over the age of 60 who are experiencing behavioral health challenges, or physical disabilities targeting **anxiety, depression, and loneliness.**

Why Focus on Aging?

- ❑ 15-20 percent of older adults have depression, which if untreated leads to other health problems
- ❑ Men aged 75 and older have the highest suicide rate
- ❑ Up to 15 percent of older adults are at-risk drinkers
- ❑ Up to 23 percent deal with polypharmacy issues
- ❑ 1 out of 4 older adults say they feel isolated from other people
- ❑ 1 in 3 older adults say they lack companionship (National Poll on Health Aging, 2019)

Oregon Aging: Fast Facts

Age and Sex	
Persons under 18 years, percent, 2018	20.8%
Persons 65 years and over, percent, 2018	17.6%

- 10,000 baby boomers turn 65 every day, a trend that will continue until 2029.

By 2030, the older adult population will more than double and will be greater than person under the age of 18 for the first time.

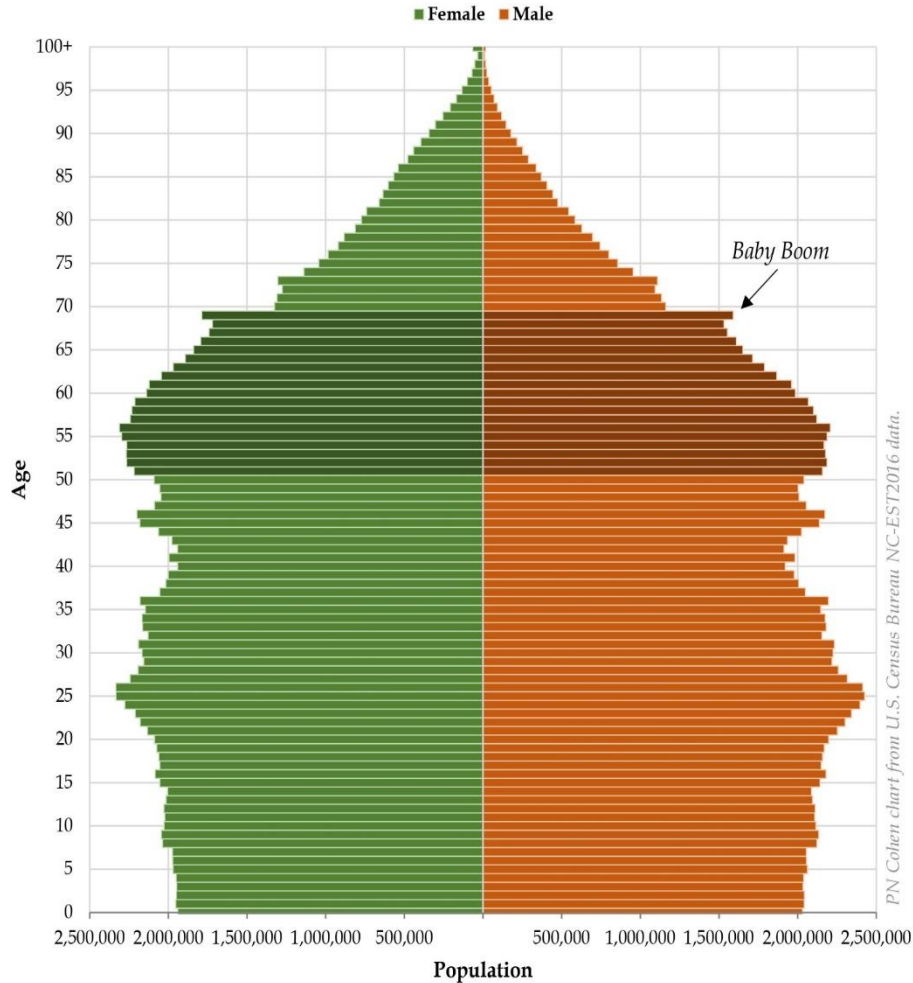
U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2016



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U.S. Population Pyramid: July 1, 2016



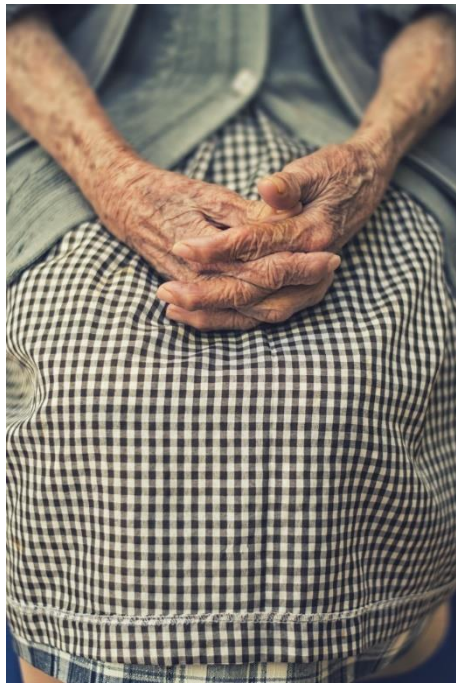
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WHO Age Friendly Communities



“Age-friendly environments foster healthy and active ageing by building and maintaining intrinsic capacity across the life course and enabling greater functional ability in someone with a given level of capacity”

[*World report on aging and health*](#)



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WHO Age-Friendly Communities

- Recognize the wide range of capacities and resources among older people
- Anticipate and respond to aging-related needs and preferences
- Respect decisions and lifestyle choices
- Protect (and design for) those who are most vulnerable
- Promote inclusion in and contribution
- Follow recommendations for physical spaces and environment



Why should we care about being age-friendly?



1. Compliance
2. It's the right thing
3. Know thy customer
(funding sources)
4. Self-interest
5. Meaningful

Adapted from "Access is a Civil Right" by Betty Seigal, 2017



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What's your mission?

Mission

- Connect with people of all ages and backgrounds with information, ideas and experiences to provide enjoyment, inspiration and enrichment through a love and appreciation of

Community Impact

- How do you measure success?
 - Positive impacts on the civic, cultural and educational health of your audiences and communities



Aging Myths

- ❑ Most older adults are care-dependent
- ❑ Most older adults have health problems
- ❑ Older adults are mostly the same
- ❑ Older adults aren't interested in learning new things
- ❑ Older adults don't know how to use a computer
- ❑ Older adults are set in their ways
- ❑ Older adults make up a small segment of the market



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Biological Aging Domains

- Physical
- Cognitive
- Sensory
- Sociological



Stages of Life

- Infancy (Ages 0-3): *Vitality*
- Early Childhood (Ages 3-6): *Playfulness*
- Middle Childhood (Ages 6-8): *Imagination*
- Late Childhood (Ages 9-11): *Ingenuity*
- Adolescence (Ages 12-20): *Passion*
- Early Adulthood (Ages 20-35): *Enterprise*
- Midlife (Ages 35-50): *Contemplation*
- Mature Adulthood (Ages 50-80): *Benevolence* – Contributors to the betterment of society through volunteerism, mentorships, and other forms of philanthropy.
- Late Adulthood (Age 80+): *Wisdom* – Those with long lives have acquired a rich repository of experiences that they can use to help guide others.



Adapted from The Human Odyssey, Dr.
Thomas Armstrong, 2008



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Tops Barriers to Access

- ❑ Comfort – Overcrowding, Aesthetics, cleanliness, rest areas
- ❑ Sensory – Signage, Lighting, Noise levels
- ❑ Physical – Availability of physical access points, seating, proximity
- ❑ Sense of Safety – patrolling, areas well-maintained, pedestrian use encouraged
- ❑ Practical – Transportation, cost prohibition, and awareness



10 Ways to be Age-Friendly

Adapted from Age-Friendly NYC, 2011

1. Be the welcome wagon.
2. Encourage social engagement. Many adults enjoy regular activities that encourage contribution.
3. Be accessible.
 - Keep materials where they are easy to reach—not too high or too low.
 - Make sure aisles are clear, try to ensure that a person using a wheelchair or walker can get not just in the door but to all parts of your space.
 - Have assistive listening/visual devices available for programs and classes.
 - “Sitewise”
 - Have the best lighting possible for safety and accessibility.

10 ways continued...

4. Invite your community.

- Use bulletin boards, local newspapers, and senior-specific outreach to promote programs and events.
- Promote inside and out.

5. Think of the whole person – be ***trauma-informed***

- Outreach to retirement communities, AARP groups, senior centers, and other organizations reaching older adults
- Let them know about the full range of programs, not just “senior” activities, i.e, online content for people who struggle to get out, intergenerational programming for grandparents



10 ways continued...

6. Have chairs in convenient places, hard-backed with arms can be easier for some. Standing for long periods of time (especially in line) can be challenging for some.
7. Use older adults as volunteers – all kinds (or....pay them!)
8. Offer 50+ programs – get creative with titles
9. Know local resources, especially transportation

Adapted from Age-Friendly NYC, 2011



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10 ways (cont.)

□ 10. Consider your collection and resources:

- As many languages as your community speaks
- Large print signs, brochures, other materials
- Various types of magnifiers available and advertised widely
- Historically or locally significant artifacts or exhibits
- Docents, facilitators, other volunteers
- Older Adults *as a* historical/contextual resource, speakers bureau or storytelling events
- Art-making supplies from other programs
- Items for research, check out, download, or online content – offer workshops to learn how to use



Ok, more ways....

- The biggest barriers to reaching our *most* vulnerable:
 - ▣ Transportation
 - ▣ Cost prohibition
- Do you have:
 - ▣ A travelling outreach/speaker program?
 - ▣ Material for check out?
 - ▣ (FREE) Content accessible by email, mail, phone?
 - ▣ Extra tickets/space that can be donated or covered by grants, donations?
 - ▣ Free days? (That aren't too crowded or overwhelming?)
 - ▣ Reduced admission for seniors or people with disabilities?

Dementia, memory loss, and cognitive impairment

Loss of cognitive functioning serious enough to interfere with daily functioning

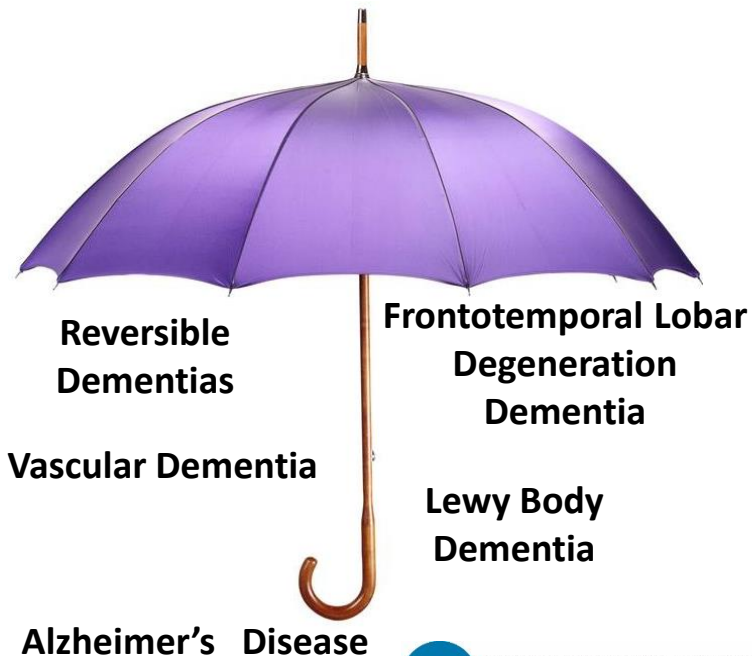
Causes changes in: • Navigation

• Memory • Behavior

• Language

• Abstract Thought

1. During registration, ask questions about accommodation and comfort
2. Provide reminder calls
3. Provide maps, simple/clear directions
4. Let your teams know who is coming



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Physical space key design elements

- ❑ Pleasant, accommodating
- ❑ Sensory accommodations
- ❑ Parking, accessibility, outdoor lighting
- ❑ Pedestrian-friendly
- ❑ Comfortable seating
- ❑ Clear signage
- ❑ Unobstructed walkways



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If you build it, will they come?

- ☐ Is it crowded or crowded or uncomfortable?
- ☐ Is it *for* them?
- ☐ Does it value their lived experience?
- ☐ Does it honor their adulthood?
- ☐ Is it at a time/place/location that's convenient?
- ☐ Is there parking?
- ☐ Is it safe?



The Language of *Culture Change*

Old language	Preferred
Elderly, senior citizen, old person	Older adult, 50+, Adult
Suffering from, victim of...	Living with...
Disabled	Person who uses a wheelchair/walker
AlzTimers or OldsTimers	Alzheimer's

Adapted from Pioneer Network, 2016



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Promotion and design

- ❑ Don't use "old" language
- ❑ Open programs for "all ages"
- ❑ Focus on program, time of day
- ❑ Offer social component
- ❑ Offer coffee/snacks



Program Titles:

- ❑ *"Arts in the Afternoon"*
- ❑ *"Death Café"*
- ❑ *"Choir for the Tone Deaf"*
- ❑ *"Sex, Drugs, and Rock n' Roll"*
- ❑ *"Granny does Graffiti"*
- ❑ *"Geezer Gallery"*
- ❑ *"Not your Mother's (fill-in-the-blank)"*
- ❑ *"Conductorcise"*
- ❑ *"Art and Meditation"*

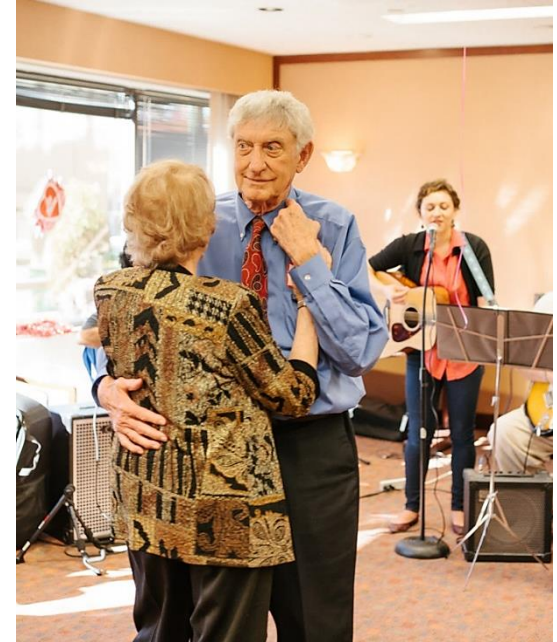


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Creating your own programs

- Select a theme – existing resources, discussion topics: health/wellness, life-long learning, skill-building, meaning/helping others, historical/reminiscent, nature-based, utilization of expertise
- Prepare 3-5 discussion/connection questions
- Multi-sensory/hands-on component
- Have a takeaway



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What is creative engagement?

Creative engagement is a person-centered approach which encourages and invites people to creatively express themselves through participation.

- ❑ A welcoming, encouraging attitude from staff, leaders, and co-participants.
- ❑ A participatory approach...for everyone!
- ❑ Encouraging persons with dementia to use strengths, skills, personal histories, and abilities.
- ❑ Open creative expression without fear of being judged or dismissed.
- ❑ Person feels safe and comfortable to participate on their own terms.
- ❑ Mindful and meditative

Adapted from Alzheimer's Society's "Meaningful Engagement"



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Types of creative engagement

- Poetry
- Visual Art Viewing
- Art Making
- Storytelling
- Music
- Movement
- Theater
- Cultural experience
- Museum visits
- Exploring Nature
- Horticulture Therapy



Programs for special populations



1. **Meet Me at MoMA**
2. **SPARK: Creative engagement for people with memory loss**

<https://vimeo.com/52002205>

3. **Memory Cafés**
4. **Timeslips**
5. **Denver Ballet Parkinsons Dance**
6. **Veterans Song Writing and Art-Marking**

- ❑ Creative storytelling
- ❑ Focus on in-the-moment interaction, creation, and imagination
- ❑ No pressure to “remember”
- ❑ For everyday interaction, meaningful activities, and community engagement
- ❑ **Creative Engagement Training - March 12th – 13th, 2020**



Get the picture

- ❑ Use pictures with “whimsy”
- ❑ Avoid “real” pictures – staged photos are nice
- ❑ What’s interesting? What draws you in?
- ❑ Internet sources: google images
- ❑ Old calendars
- ❑ Use variety







Awkward
Family
Photos®



Granny Does Graffiti



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Project Generations



Oo

More Programs for 50+

- Horticulture Therapy
- ArtReach
- Sensory Trail with Boulder Nature Park
- PHAMALY Theater Company w/ Talk Back
- Your Story with History Colorado



Music, music, music!

- ❑ Conductorcise®
- ❑ Sound Painting
- ❑ Choir for the Tone Deaf
- ❑ Music for People
- ❑ Song Circles
- ❑ Open Mic Afternoon
- ❑ Beat the Blues
- ❑ Inside the Orchestra
- ❑ Circle Singing
- ❑ B Sharp Orchestra Program
- ❑ Brassical Adventures
- ❑ Music for Life
- ❑ Music & Art Making
- ❑ Veterans Song-writing workshops



Washington County Libraries

- ❑ Memory Kits
- ❑ Death Cafes
- ❑ Lecture Series
- ❑ Storytelling
- ❑ Art of the Story
- ❑ Concerts
- ❑ Book Clubs
- ❑ Movie discussions



What makes the best programs?

Your passion!



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Training available for staff and volunteers

- ❑ Timeslips Creative Engagement – March 2020
- ❑ Older Adult Mental Health First Aid
- ❑ Environmental Scans – LGBTQ, Age-Friendly, Social-friendly
- ❑ De-Escalation Training
- ❑ Memory Loss and cognitive impairment
- ❑ SPARK Creative Engagement for Museums
- ❑ The “Cafes” – Memory, Age, Death, World
- ❑ Meet Me at MoMA Arts Engagement Docent/facilitator training
- ❑ Trauma-informed creative engagement and conversation techniques



Aging Resources non-traditional partners

- ❑ Oregon Gerontological Society
- ❑ Alzheimer's Association, Parkinson's Association
- ❑ Aging and Disability Resource Center
- ❑ SAGE – Advocacy for LGBTQ Elders
- ❑ Area Agency on Aging
- ❑ Gerontology or Aging Services university programs

Thank you!
From Oregon's
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(OABHI)

Washington County

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