



*“Open your senior years to the **Arts**”*

JUNE 2 - 8, 2008

EDMONTON, ALBERTA



The **CREATIVE AGE FESTIVAL** was launched during Seniors Week, June 2-8, 2008, as Edmonton's newest festival and Canada's largest in celebration of "arts and aging".

From the seeds of a desire, originating in the Arts and Humanities in Medicine Program at the University of Alberta, to promote more arts programming for seniors, the festival concept grew to include many **community partners**, including the City of Edmonton, the Edmonton Seniors Coordinating Council, the Edmonton Arts Council, the Nina Haggerty Centre for the Arts, Capital Health, Edmonton Public Library and other faculties within the university.

Following a few short months of brainstorming and planning by the organizing committee, comprising representatives of all of the partners, and with the help of some sponsor dollars and a festival producer hired in the weeks leading up the event, it all came together quickly. A website was launched to assist with promoting the festival and raising public awareness, and all of the festival activities were offered to the public **free** of charge.

More than 1,000 seniors took part in the activities and organizers are optimistic that the 2008 Creative Age Festival marked the beginning of a significant initiative in our city. Over the span of the first three days of the event, the profile of arts and aging was raised markedly in the community through participation by seniors and staff representatives from senior-serving organizations, and by the media, both local and national.



BENEFITS OF ARTS FOR OLDER ADULTS

- The festival highlighted the importance of the arts for older adults (55 years and older) in relation to creative expression, lifelong learning, health (physical and mental), and well-being.

“Research states that seniors who are involved in the arts report improved health, fewer visits to the doctor, decreased use of medication, decreased loneliness, decreased depression and increased morale.” S. Perlstein, 2008

- The contribution of arts involvement to the vitality of communities is significant — it stimulates the economy, draws tourists, and contributes to both the social and cultural aspects of the community.



CREATIVE AGE FESTIVAL OVERVIEW

PURPOSE:

- To recognize the vital contribution and benefit of the arts in relation to lifelong learning, creative expression, mental and physical health, and overall well-being;
- To recognize and celebrate artistic accomplishments of seniors;
- To encourage increased opportunities and arts-based participation by seniors; and
- To promote and encourage quality arts-based programming and engagement in later life.

FOCUS:

The festival's five **focus areas** are: visual arts/photography, theatre/performance, music/song, creative writing/literary arts, and films on arts and aging.



2008 FESTIVAL HIGHLIGHTS

- **Launch Celebration** at City Hall with drama, music and poetry performances by older adults; welcoming address by Mayor Stephen Mandel; brief address by keynote speaker Susan Perlstein to whet everyone's appetite for what was to come; and interactive displays/visual arts exhibits.
- **Celebration of Creative Aging Symposium** at the University of Alberta that attracted participants from across Canada. Highlights included:
 - keynote address by Susan Perlstein (Director of Education and Training for the National Center on Creative Aging, Washington, DC);
 - twenty dynamic breakout sessions ranging from art, intergenerational programs, dance, and drama to creativity, humour, writing, and promising practices (local programmers were invited to showcase their projects);
 - a panel discussion on increasing support of Creative Aging locally, provincially, and nationally;
 - formation of a great network of like-minded individuals.



- **Ten Arts Workshops** at the Seniors Association of Greater Edmonton (SAGE), the U of A Faculty of Extension building, Art Gallery of Alberta and Edmonton Public Library, led by professional artists, provided an opportunity for older adults to learn new skills in creative dance, stand-up comedy, visual arts, writing, music composition, drawing, and drama. Feedback assured organizers the workshops were appreciated. A resource directory is being compiled with names of instructors that senior organizations can approach to offer these types of classes throughout the year.

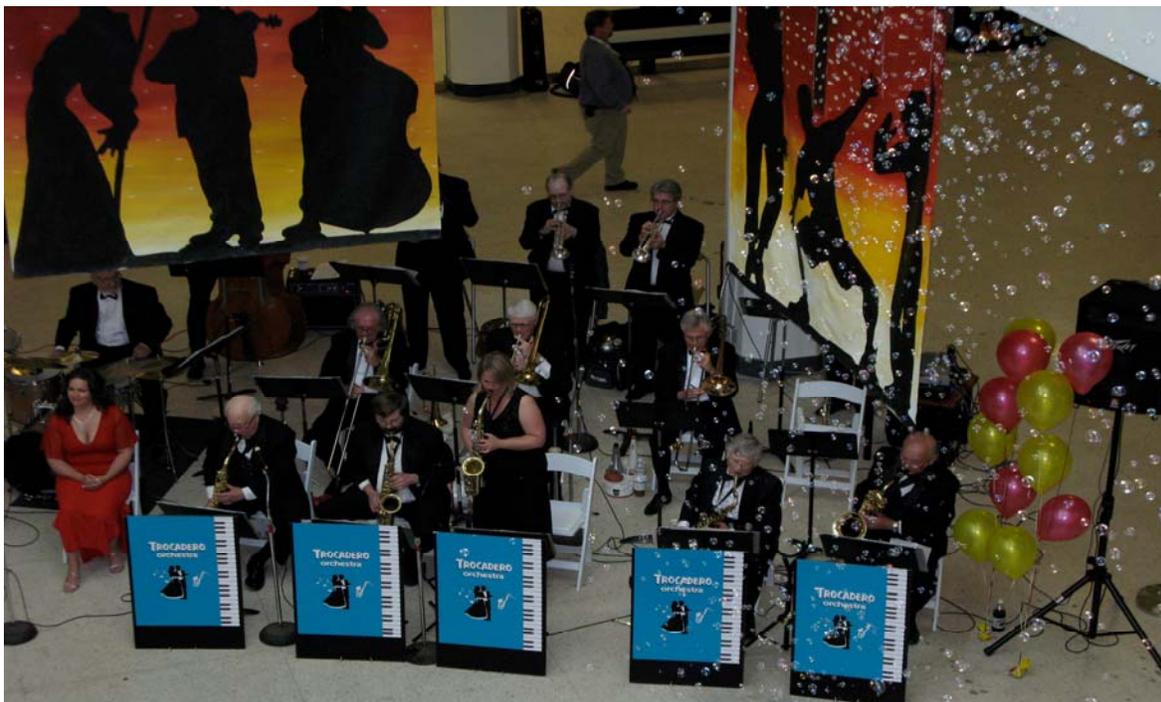


- **Two Film Events** at Edmonton Public Library and the Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital featured “arts and aging” films *The Courage to Dream*, *Do Not Go Gently*, *Tibor Jankay: The Art of Survival* and *Amargosa*.

- **Four Community Arts Cafés** at SAGE and Axis Café enabled seniors to showcase their artistic talents. Art and artisan displays, performances by some local senior choirs and singing groups, and short stories and poetry written and read by local seniors, were presented in a lively, fun atmosphere.



- **Calendar of Events** promoted other seniors events in the community.
- **Art Gallery of Alberta** offered free admission to seniors all week.
- **Creative Age Party/Finale** at the U of A Faculty of Extension building gave organizers and attendees a chance to celebrate with The Trocadero Orchestra Big Band, while Arthur Murray Dance Studio couples encouraged audience members to get out on the dance floor and kick up their heels. Mayor Mandel, Councillors Linda Sloan and Ben Henderson, and former Councillors Janice Melnychuk and Michael Phair showed their support by joining in the festivities.



SUCCESS INDICATORS

The first year was an outstanding success!

- **1,000 participants** attended key festival events and an additional **1,000 older adults** attended local senior centres to have tea with the Mayor as part of the festival outreach.
- **Over \$50,000** was received from sponsors including the City of Edmonton, University of Alberta, Edmonton Seniors Coordinating Council, Edmonton Arts Council, SAGE, City Lumber Corporation, Capital Health-Community Care, the Nina Haggerty Centre for the Arts, United Active Living Inc., Alberta Centre on Aging, Edmonton Public Library, Perpetual Notion (brochure and poster design), and other corporate and community sponsors. The festival realized a small surplus that will support planning for 2009.
- **Extensive collaboration and coordination** between seniors and arts community stakeholders
- **High profile media coverage** of the festival, importance of the arts for older adults, and the skill of senior artists
- Well-used and informative **festival website** www.creativeagefestival.ca
- **Leading edge research** shared with arts and seniors organizations
- **Older adults** were actively involved in all aspects of the festival ... **senior artists** provided inspiration to all!

PLANNING

Planning is underway for the 2009 **Creative Age Festival**, which will expand as interest and resources increase. Future work (beyond the festival) related to arts and aging is also being explored.



Contact Information:

Website: www.creativeagefestival.ca

Sheila Hallett
Executive Director, Edmonton Seniors Coordinating Council
780.423.5635
sheila@seniorscouncil.net
www.seniors.council.net

Linda Sloan
City Councillor, City of Edmonton
780.496.8122
linda.sloan@edmonton.ca
www.edmonton.ca

Brenda Wong
Seniors Coordinator, City of Edmonton
780.944.0462
brenda.wong@edmonton.ca
www.edmonton.ca

Pamela Brett-MacLean
Assistant Professor and Co-Director of Arts and Humanities in Health & Medicine
Program, Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry, University of Alberta
780.492.0980
pbrett-maclean@med.ualberta.ca
www.med.ualberta.ca/education/ahhm.cfm

