

2018 Creative Aging Festival Presents More Than 50 Ways to Celebrate Older Americans Month in May

Fairfax County, VA—**ARTSFAIRFAX** is delighted to partner with Fairfax County and other community partners for the 2018 Creative Aging Festival during the month of May, coinciding with Older Americans Month. The Creative Aging Festival celebrates older adults' creativity and participation in the arts across Fairfax County through visual, music, theatre, dance, literary, and culinary arts activities.

More than fifty free, interactive events are planned at twenty-nine senior, community, and art centers throughout the county to engage residents and visitors in the arts, showcase the achievements of senior artists, and highlight the positive benefits of the arts as we age. Offerings include:

- BodyWise Dance and seniors creating unique dances together at the Sully Senior Center.
- African Drumming and Poly Rhythms with Emmanuel (Kofi) Dennis where participants can learn songs, stories, and history while drumming ancient African beats at the Bailey's Senior Center and Sully Senior Center.
- The dancers, singers and musicians of Helping Hearts Through the Arts collaborating with participants on an imaginative journey at the Lincolnia Senior Center.
- Engaging seniors in Hula's ancient tradition of storytelling using movement and music at the Workhouse Arts Center.
- La Movida Arts for the Aging, Inc. (AFTA) bringing music and dance from Spain and Latin America to life with dynamic performances and colorful costumes at the Lorton Senior Center.

"**ARTSFAIRFAX** recognizes the power of creativity as an agent of change in the lives of seniors and believes that everyone on the aging spectrum should have access to high-quality, creative learning experiences in their communities. Dancing, singing, and other arts activities engage mind and body, making lives healthier and fun," says Linda Sullivan, President & CEO, **ARTSFAIRFAX**.

It's no secret that the US population is rapidly aging and the 2018 Creative Aging Festival is one of the programming collaborations **ARTSFAIRFAX** has invested in to respond to this demographic shift. The vital relationship between creative expression and healthy aging is nationally recognized and evident in numerous research studies. A [2017 University of Michigan study](#), for example, found that older adults who both created art and attended arts events reported higher cognitive functioning and lower rates of both hypertension and improved physical activity.

What social scientists have learned through research, choreographer and founder of Body Wise Dance, Margot Greenlee, has seen every time she leads groups through dance. She said of the Festival, "I think the key benefit of dancing together is that it's fun. So we get all of the obvious health benefits - stronger bodies, increased range of movement, improved balance - AND we connect with other people; our imaginations get fired up; we enjoy the music. Dance stimulates on multiple fronts. The emotional and cognitive benefits are just as important as the health benefits."

Recognizing this, **ARTSFAIRFAX** and Fairfax County Neighborhood and Community Services are together drawing on the rich cultural resources of the county to engage seniors in a broad range of arts activities. **ARTSFAIRFAX** created an extensive roster of artists and organizations for the county's senior and community centers, training for teaching artists, and networking opportunities. The Festival's intent is to inspire seniors to actively draw on their own creativity and imagination. And by acting together, this public/private collaboration expands the capacity of both partner organizations to support and enrich the lives of adults across the aging spectrum going forward.

"Pursuing the arts in all of their forms provides so much in the way of socialization, personal enjoyment, lifelong learning opportunities and community involvement - and that's why Senior Centers in Fairfax County and the City of Fairfax have focused on including the arts in the programming options we offer at our locations," said Evan Braff, Regional Manager, Fairfax County Neighborhood and Community Services

The Creative Aging Festival supports Fairfax County's 50+ Community Action Plan's Arts Initiative to promote arts programming for and by older adults. Core objectives include encouraging older adult participation in the community's many public and private arts programs; promoting public understanding of the benefits of older adult participation in the arts; and providing awareness to the broader community about the existing arts services for older adults in Fairfax County as well as the benefits these programs can have for diverse audiences. This year's Creative Aging Festival is presented by the Fairfax County Neighborhood and Community Services in collaboration with the Arts Council of Fairfax County.

To find an event at a senior center or community center near you, visit the [Creative Aging Festival 2018 site](#).

Creative Aging Festival 2018 is a partnership of **ARTSFAIRFAX**, Fairfax County Neighborhood and Community Services, Fairfax County Adult Day Health Care, Reston Community Center, City of Fairfax and the Workhouse Arts Center. It is sponsored by Jean Schiro-Zavela and Vance Zavela.

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