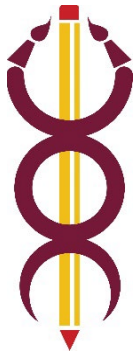


2024 Art for Life Program Gathering

Bismarck Art & Gallery Association, 422 E. Front Ave., Bismarck, ND



Creative Aging, Arts, and Health



Art is medicine. Studies indicate that art positively impacts the immune system, blood pressure, heart rate, and respiration. Music stimulates the production of natural endorphins and can be used in pain management. Dance improves gait speed and balance, while reducing frailty and fall risk. Cultural programs improve cognitive functions of older people with dementia. Arts programs reduce risk factors that lead to the need for long-term care. Arts serve as vehicles for creative engagement that also reduces loneliness and its negative health impacts. Like physical therapy, consistent, ongoing participation in such programming is essential for positive impact.

When: Thursday, September 26, 1 PM – 5:30 PM

1:00 PM – 1:20 PM: Welcome and Introductions

1:20 – 2:00 PM: *Art for Life: Folk Arts, Aging, Health, and Wellness*, Troyd Geist – Folklorist
Troyd Geist will introduce the North Dakota Council on the Arts' *Art for Life Program* which seeks to improve the health and wellness of elders, often including intergenerational interaction, through intensive art and artist interactions. He also will discuss the medical, sociological, and other studies that explain how art sparks positive health and wellness benefits through the consistent, ongoing creative interaction of older adults.

2:00 PM – 2:45 PM: *Creative Healing: Storytelling through Traditional Art, Pieper Bloomquist* - Contemporary folk artist Pieper Fleck Bloomquist will discuss how she uses the traditional Swedish Folk Arts of *dalmålning* and *bonadsmålning* (painted narrative tapestries) to help with community and personal storytelling. Using recent paintings as examples and her experiences as an Oncology nurse, she will describe her process of gathering stories from elders and community members, providing intergenerational painting workshops, and discuss the impact her activities have had on both her and the people she has served.

2:45 PM – 3:30 PM: *Nurturing Elder Engagement, Memory and Cognitive Health Through Visual Thinking Strategies, Rebecca Engelman* – Visual Thinking Strategy (VTS) is an inquiry-based teaching method that improves a participant’s ability to describe, analyze, and interpret imagery and information through observing and discussing visual art. VTS supports the development of critical thinking skills and encourages participation in collaborative discussions, especially among those who struggle with traditional text-based or lecture-based learning environments. At the core VTS is a practice, or facilitation protocol, used to hold space for a group doing structured, yet open-ended, evidence-based discussions concerning a dilemma. Teachers from all around the world are using VTS as it is truly multidisciplinary and can be used across subject matter and disciplines (Language Arts, Writing, Science, Math, Social Studies, and Critical Thinking.) More recently, VTS is gaining traction with medical institutions and health professionals with applications towards medical diagnosis, bias awareness, and inter-professional teamwork. **

3:45 PM – 4:15 PM: *TellTale: Creative Engagement and Wellbeing Through Visual Thinking Strategies and TimeSlips, Troyd Geist* – This exhibit and accompanying materials provide engagement opportunities with older adults to promote wellbeing through whimsicality and reason.

Group discussion and observation of interesting and nostalgic images, sometimes conducted intergenerationally, is meant to address the detrimental health impacts of loneliness, isolation, boredom, and forms of dementia or “forgetfulness” of older adults and to spark positive emotional and physiological wellness benefits. For example, merely looking at nostalgic images, according to a recent study, reduces activity in parts of the brain associated with pain perception, thus reducing lower-level pain such as body and headaches. The exhibit consists of the *TellTale* Swedish *bonadsmålning* painting, two didactic panels, twelve storyboards, six VTS and six TimeSlips storyboards.

4:30 PM – 5:30 PM: *Whimsicality (1): Imagination, Visual Thinking Strategies and Sculpting of Little People Homes, Rebecca Engelman****

When: Friday, September 27, 9 AM – 4:45 PM

9:00 AM – 9:30 AM: Welcome and Introductions, *Art for Life Program Q&A, Sharing Successful Stories*

9:30 AM – 11 AM: *Whimsicality (2): Imagination, Visual thinking Strategies, Painting of Little People Homes and Planting of Gardens, Rebecca Engelman* – Continuation from the previous day's activity.

11 AM – 11:45 AM: *Folklorico: Traditional Dance and Health, Marina Carrillo* - Dance is a joyful form of exercise that improves balance which can help prevent fall risk, creates social engagement that addresses loneliness and depression, helps “unfreeze” people with Parkinson’s, and sparks psychoneuroimmunological effects that improves the immune system.

“In older adults, regular exercise can prevent or delay diabetes and heart trouble. It can also reduce arthritis pain, anxiety, and depression. Regular exercise leads to improved physical function and reduced disability in older adults. It also has been shown to enhance psychosocial function and to help older people stay independent.”

11:45 AM – 1:15 PM: Lunch on your own. (Anima Cucina, Blarney Stone Pub, Peacock Alley, Fireflour Pizzeria and Coffee Bar, India Clay Oven Bar and Grill, Jimmy V’s, and more)

1:15 PM – 2:15 PM: *Zoo Animal Outreach and Education, Animal Assisted Art Activities – Brent Weston, Dakota Zoo* – Brent will present and talk about animals they use in their educational outreach. This presentation will be followed by art activities related to animals, specifically, birds.

Interacting with animals has been shown to reduce blood pressure and cholesterol, decrease anxiety, and improve a person's sense of well-being, reduce the perception of loneliness, and reduce the need for pain medication. “Animal-assisted activity programs are commonly used in long-term care facilities to enhance the well-being of older residents. ... Several benefits were identified, with no negative experiences articulated by the participants. ... [Such programs serve] as a source of social support for some participants and encouraged social interaction. Participants generally ... expressed a desire for more frequent, longer, and more interactive visits. Facilities considering animal-assisted activities (AAA) programs should consider these factors when designing their programs.”

2:30 PM – 3:15 PM: *Take Flight: Guided Imagery for Health and Healing, Keith Bear* – Directs a guided imagery session rooted in the folklore involving birds, the watching of birds and their movements, and birds as representations of unencumbered freedom of movement. He will introduce American Indian flute music and its relationship to birds. Use American Indian flute music as the vehicle for conducting a guided imagery session to positively impact the physical states of the participants, as well as their emotional sense of freedom. Guided imagery is

documented to have a positive effect on physical and emotional states. This activity can be utilized in a group or individual setting.

“Evidence from studies indicate that music has positive effects on a variety of physiologic functions and parameters, such as reduced anxiety, reduced cardiac complications, reduced blood pressure and heart rate, increased immune cell messengers, a drop in stress hormones, and a boost in natural opiates.

Eagle “breath feather” found at the front of the wing and used to steer the bird in flight. Eagles, which are considered sacred to American Indians, are said to bring messages and to help people.

3:15 PM – 4:00 PM: *Light as a Feather: Blind Contour Line Drawing and Painting, Rebecca Engelman* – Continuous blind contour line drawing is a challenging yet fun exercise in observation and hand-eye coordination that may be new to many participants. As such, the activity provides new mental and visual stimulation that will help to address boredom. The idea of this activity is to throw “perfection” out the window and instead embrace whatever happens. If someone has a shaky hand or other mobility issue, the extra bumps and waves in the lines really are just a part of the texture and should thus be embraced. The sense of control over the finalized mark-making, as well as the unique choices the participants will be encouraged to make helps to address the sense of helplessness.

Studies also indicate that such exercises can be beneficial for post-stroke rehabilitation for those who lost the use of their dominant hand and ability to speak by strengthening the capacity of their non-dominant hand to write.

4:00 PM – 4:45 PM: *Exercise Ball Drumming: Training to Promote the Physical, Cognitive, and Social Engagement of Older Adults, Hamzat Amoussa Koriko, Ph.D.* – Hamzat developed an ongoing, online, and in-person exercise ball drumming training program. It provides the knowledge and skills to incorporate Togolese African drumming techniques into engagement activities with older people. Regular sessions focus on eldercare activity directors building upon their skills and knowledge so that they, in turn, can advance the capacity of the elder residents they serve. The program starts with basic drumming techniques and movements and gradually advances to more complex rhythms and patterns. The interactive training is designed with a social emotional approach, promoting physical activity, cognitive stimulation, social interaction, and cultural immersion.

