

Creative Ageing in London Newsletter

July 2009

Welcome to the July 2009 newsletter of the Creative Ageing in London project, delivered by Age Exchange with funding from the Big Lottery Fund.

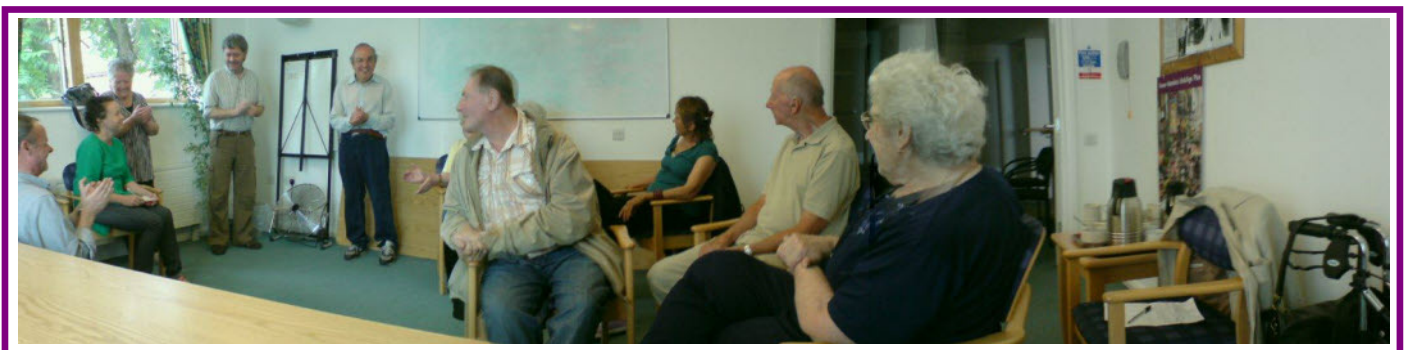
The 'Creative Ageing in London' project was funded by the Big Lottery Fund's Reaching Communities programme, and aims to achieve stronger communities with more active citizens.

This newsletter will focus on:

- a progress report from the Sundial Centre in Bethnal Green on our Creative Arts Residency there
- a feature on the intergenerational show 'To Care For' at Greenwich Theatre
- a review of our work in caring cafes around London
- more details on the end-of-project public seminar in August 2009

CREATIVE ARTS RESIDENCY AT THE SUNDIAL CENTRE

The Creative Arts Residency involves working with a group of older people to create a reminiscence theatre production and related artwork inspired by their memories, featuring the older people in the performance. Since June we have been running reminiscence arts sessions with different groups at the Sundial Centre identifying group members who would like to contribute memories and take part in a reminiscence theatre production in front of a local audience.



In rehearsal for 'You Have To Laugh'

The Sundial Centre was established in 1999 to provide a holistic approach to supporting older people living in the community. Developed by London Catalyst in partnership with the Peabody Trust and London Borough of Tower Hamlets, it originated from a basic principle of providing integrated, multi-disciplinary services across the areas of health, social care and community facilities. The Sundial Centre has built up an excellent reputation for providing a high quality day care service for older people. It has proved an ideal venue for Age Exchange to work in, as it is so open to our philosophy of encouraging creativity in later life.

Following a period of reminiscence sessions, improvisation workshops and rehearsals, we have devised a piece of reminiscence theatre that dramatises and links together some of the group members' most significant life-experiences, including music from the period as a soundtrack. The cast for the show is made up of 5 people who attend the Sundial Centre and a team of Age Exchange workers. The show has been directed by Simon Geal, with the support of Chloe Harbour, Simon Purins, Malcolm Jones and Bernie Arigho. Group members have also painted a large canvas backdrop for the play, highlighting some of the scenes and memories that will be acted out by the cast. The performance will be at the Sundial Centre at 1.30 on Friday August 21st.

“YOU HAVE TO LAUGH”

Produced by Age Exchange and The Sundial Centre

Scene Order



- Prologue by Vi
The Tale of a Penny

- Vera's Story
Henrietta Street – Children's Games, The Peanut Man, The Scissor Man, The Sand Man, The Pig Trotter Man, Old Nick and the Apple, Snow in the Night

- Maureen's Story
The Labour Exchange, The Milliners, The Aldershot Palais

- Steven's Story
Grandfather's shoe shop, The Family Meal, The Wedding, Caring for Mother

- Olivia's Story
Childhood in Jamaica, Imaginary scene with father

- The Old Cleaner and The Kids

- Epilogue
The Tale of a Penny (reprise)

‘TO CARE FOR’

“To Care For” is a unique intergenerational theatre production focusing on the subject of care for and by older people from the pre war period to the present day. The play has been devised from first hand reminiscence of family, community and institutionalised geriatric care. “To Care For” is not an attempt to reflect comprehensively the national experience of care but to tell faithfully the stories of the people who have taken part in this project.

Over the last 12 months 8 projects have been carried out in care settings across London as well as 44 filmed individual interviews, each exploring the theme of care. The resulting recorded material has contributed to the theatre production as well as a touring arts exhibition. The recorded interviews will be archived with the British Library for future study.



Each year Age Exchange works in many care settings across London and the wider UK, supplying arts and reminiscence activities for older people, providing training for care staff and hosting residencies and intergenerational workshops. The idea for this project came from talking with many frail older people in day and residential care, hospitals and hospices. When reflecting on the care they are receiving they frequently shared memories of how parents and grandparents were cared for before the advent of the NHS.

Equally important and insightful were the memories they shared of parents and grandparents as carers for others within neighbourhoods and communities. This project represents an important opportunity to reflect on the history of care for older people at a time when services and care institutions struggle to improve the services they provide and are under scrutiny.

Giving neglected older people the opportunity to share memories, to reflect on personal experience of care through creative media, aims to enable us all to learn from their experience while raising the issue of improving standards and looking to the future of person centred creative care.

This project aims to underline the intrinsic importance of linking all care to valuing and understanding the individual’s life experience, and to making the case for the necessity and Importance of reminiscence arts as an art form that speaks with and for the ‘people’. By involving younger people and arts and health professionals in the project we aim to disseminate findings and practice through enjoyment of the arts, ultimately with a view to improving opportunities for people to learn about care and with a view to improving future standards of care in London.

'To Care For' scenes

1. The Geriatric Hospital

A newly-trained nurse brings about dramatic improvements in care and nutrition for a ward of older patients in 1948, at the birth of the NHS.

2. Joan's Nan – part 1

We meet Joan's Nan before the Second World War, taking on the main responsibility for bringing Joan up.

3. Doreen's Momma – part 1.

We are introduced to Doreen's grandmother, who entertains her granddaughters with memories of Jamaica as she combs their hair.

4. A life in the Salvation Army

Mary visits her mother in the care home, and they exchange memories that reinforce their love for each other and their Salvation Army faith.

5. Misdiagnosis

A son with his dying mother in hospital is given contradictory information about her condition.

6. Living with guilt

An exploration of the emotional journey of someone who feels they could have done more for a loved one, and who eventually finds peace and resolution.

7. Iris's grandmother

Iris does her grandmother's hair as they listen to old gramophone records together.

8. Whose job is it to feed the patient?

A daughter becomes aware that her mother in hospital is not being given the help to eat that she needs.

9. Shall we dance?

A care assistant in a care home shows us how she engages with the residents in activities that other people say they cannot do.

10. Ralph's grandmother

Ralph takes his grandmother on an imaginary drive through Kent in the sidecar of his motor-bike.

11. Husbands with Alzheimer's

Two women share their experiences of caring for their husbands who both have Alzheimer's Disease.

'To Care For' scenes

12. Pauline's mother

Pauline and her brother have a heart to heart discussion about coming to terms with their mother's death, and together manage to find humour in even the worst of times.

13. Goodbye to Billy Flynn

Billy Flynn's last few years were not so lonely as the funeral guests thought.

14. Neighbours who care

Kitty shows us how neighbours used to take care of each other in her street.

15. Joan's Nan – part 2.

It is after the war and the roles are reversed, as the grown-up Joan is now caring for her Nan.

16. Doreen's Momma – part 2.

We see Doreen's Momma one last time, as Doreen reads to her from Corinthians about what love is.

17. Eileen's grandmother at the seaside

The play ends with Eileen taking her grandmother to the seaside for her grandmother's very first glimpse of the sea. 'It's so beautiful. Is it real?'

The play was performed twice at Greenwich Theatre on July 31st and August 1st. A review and audience feedback will be included in the final project newsletter in September 2009.

CREATIVE AGEING END-OF-YEAR SEMINAR

The **end-of-project seminar** will be held at Greenwich Theatre on Thursday 27th August 2009.

Delegates will receive detailed presentations on all the different elements of the project, including film clips from our two community theatre productions, and will be able to take part in workshops illustrating different applications of reminiscence to the arts and to care.

You can download the information leaflet and booking form from Age Exchange's website.

REMINISCENCE SESSIONS IN CARING CAFES

Caring Cafes are a relatively new way of meeting some of the social support needs of carers of people in the community. They aim to provide an informal and welcoming venue in the community where carers and the people they care for can go to for support and entertaining activities. Some are specifically set up for people who have dementia, their family and friends.

We ran 8 reminiscence one-off sessions in 3 caring cafes around London to see if this was an activity that could become part of the overall service provided.

The Poppy Café in Balham is a joint venture between the Alzheimers Society SW London, Age Concern Wandsworth, The Furzedown project and Wandsworth Carers Centre.

The Caring Café in Catford is run by Crossroads Greenwich and Lewisham.

The Healthy Ageing Café in Bermondsey is run in partnership by The South London and Maudsley Mental Health Trust and the Alzheimers Society Southwark.

Broad inclusive themes were chosen for these 'taster' sessions – Food and Drink, Games and Play, Keeping Warm in Winter, At the Seaside. On average about 8 people from the Cafes attended the sessions, usually a mixture of carers and the people they care for.

Feedback reinforced our original view that a structured reminiscence group session fitted in well with the overall aims of the cafes. It gave an opportunity for people to recall and share memories that otherwise would not have come to mind, and that would have been difficult to share in the wider circle of the café. This helped them to feel more at home in the café, and to get to know each other better. The sessions met their social needs and, in the case of those who have dementia, helped to stimulate them and assist their communication.

