

The Creative Age Festival:

“Creating a culture in support of lifelong learning and arts-based engagement in later life in Edmonton”

Presented by:

Linda Sloan, City Councillor

Brenda Wong, Seniors Coordinator

Sheila Hallett, Edmonton Seniors Coordinating Council

IFA Conference, September 2008



Overview of Edmonton



Photo provided by Edmonton.com

- Capital City of Alberta, western Canada
- Fifth largest municipality in Canada
- Blue sky and sunshine through all seasons
- A booming, vibrant city that bustles with arts, theatre, cultural events: festivals, world's largest mall, sports teams

Overview of Edmonton

- Cultural Capital of Canada
- Known as “Festival City”
- River valley is an enormous band of natural green space 22 times larger than Central Park in New York City, filled with parks and trails





Seniors and the arts

- Various arts-based programs available at a few senior centres and other community venues in Edmonton
- University of Alberta student completes a dissertation on arts and aging and approaches City
- (see Pamela Brett-MacLean's research at www.med.ualberta.ca/education/document/PBMDissertationPROQuest.pdf)



Emerging research

- The findings from Gene Cohen's research confirm the health benefits to seniors through engagement in the arts
- Councillor Linda Sloan met with Pamela
- Community input sought in summer 2007
- Ideas were explored—festival concept inspired group



Creative Age Festival

Objectives:

1. 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
2. To recognize and celebrate artistic accomplishments of seniors
3. To encourage increased opportunities and arts-based participation by seniors; and
4. To promote and encourage quality arts-based programmed and engagement in later life.

Creative Age Festival

- Edmonton's newest festival and one of Canada's largest arts and aging celebrations
- "Seniors who are involved in the arts report improved health, fewer doctor's visits, decreased use of medication, decreased loneliness and depression, and increased morale."

S. Perlstein, 2008

- Festival highlighted seniors' contributions to the arts and the importance of the arts to older adults



Creative Age Festival

- Focused on:
 - visual arts
 - theatre/performance
 - music
 - literary arts
 - film

- Attracted over 2,000 participants

- www.creativeagefestival.ca



Creative Age Festival

Highlights:

- Launch celebration
- Free Symposium
- Ten free art workshops
- Two film events



Creative Age Festival

- ❑ Four Community Arts Cafes
- ❑ Art Gallery – Free Admission
- ❑ Calendar of Events
- ❑ Festival Party





Creative Age Festival Successes

- Sponsorships secured from:
 - City of Edmonton
 - University of Alberta
 - Edmonton Seniors Coordinating Council
 - Edmonton Arts Council
 - City Lumber Corporation
 - SAGE (Seniors Association of Greater Edmonton)
 - United Active Living
 - Capital Health-Community Care
 - Nina Haggerty Centre for the Arts
 - Alberta Centre on Aging and others

Creative Age Festival Successes

- Media coverage (national and local) was very positive
- Attendance was good
- Quality of the events was very good
- A strong, dedicated network developed
- Budget allowed for a producer to be hired



Lessons learned ...

- The scope of the work was a challenge for small number of volunteers (committee)
- A dedicated coordinator essential



Lessons learned...

- Planning for 2009 will include a clear organizational structure for committee, sub-committees and staff
- Secure funding for 2009 early to allow for plans, budgeting etc



Lessons learned

- Evaluations indicated the desire to move forward in creating a policy framework for arts and aging programming throughout the City
- Evaluations also showed the desire by all involved to have another festival in 2009



Creative Age Festival 2009

- Commitment to involve more seniors in the planning
- More outreach to senior-serving agencies to secure their involvement
- Focus groups planned to identify most beneficial components for the 2009 festival



Festival framework...

- It allows for interactive, coordinated, cultural performances
- It allows for learning and expanding one's sense of self



Festival framework

- It reflect the concerns and interests of the community in a heightened way
- It adds a sense of playfulness, enthusiasm and joy





Contact Information

Pamela Brett-MacLean

Co-Director of Arts and Humanities in Health & Medicine, U of Alberta

780-492-0980

pbrett-maclean@med.ualberta.ca

www.med.ualberta.ca/education/ahhm.cfm

Sheila Hallett

Executive Director, Edmonton Seniors Coordinating Council

780-423-5635

sheila@seniorscouncil.net

www.seniorscouncil.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